

SUPER SCIENCE STORIES

THE BIG BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION

PRISONER OF TIME

A NOVEL OF TOMORROW'S DESTINY

by **POLTON CROSS**

THE MISSING DAY

by **HENRY
HASSE**

OUTSTANDING STORIES BY

**ARTHUR
MACOM**

**OTTO
BINDER**

AND
**MANY
OTHERS**

BRITISH EDITION
9d.



Join the Well-Paid Ranks of the I.C.S.-TRAINED MEN

MANY THOUSANDS MORE ARE URGENTLY NEEDED. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A BETTER POSITION AND BETTER PAY.

Ambitious men everywhere have succeeded through I.C.S. Home-Study Courses. So also can you.



We offer you the benefit of our 62 years of matchless experience as the creative pioneers of postal instruction.

If you need technical training, our advice on any matter concerning your work and your career is yours for the asking—free and without obligation. Let us send you full information about I.C.S. Training in the subject in which you are specially interested.

The successful man DOES today what the failure INTENDS doing tomorrow. WRITE TODAY to: Dept. 161A, I.C.S. Ltd., International Buildings, Kingsway, London, W.C.2.

USE THIS COUPON

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS LTD.

Dept. 161A

INTERNATIONAL BUILDINGS, KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C.2

Please send Special Free Booklet describing your Courses

In

Name.....AG.....

Address

Addresses for Overseas Readers

Australia: 140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney.
Egypt: 40 Sharia Abdel Khalek Sarwat Pasha, Cairo.
Eire: 13 Angelsea Street, Dublin, C.4.
India: Lakshmi Bldg., Sir Pherozsha Mehta Rd., Fort, Bombay.
New Zealand: 182 Wakefield Street, Wellington.
N. Ireland: 26 Howard Street, Belfast.
South Africa: Dept. L., 45 Shortmarket Street, Cape Town.

The I.C.S. offer Courses of Instruction in a wide range of subjects including:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Accountancy | Illumination Engineering |
| Advertising | Joinery |
| Air-Conditioning | Journalism |
| Architectural Drawing and Designing | Languages |
| Architecture | Machine Design |
| Auditing | Machine-Tool Work |
| Boiler Engineering | Marine Engineering |
| Book-keeping | Mechanical Drawing |
| Building Construction, Interior Work and Quantities | Mechanical Engineering |
| Building Specifications and Quantities | Mining Engineering |
| Business Management | Motor Engineering |
| Carpentry | Motor Mechanic |
| Chemical Engineering | Motor Vehicle Elec. |
| Chemistry, Inorganic and Organic | Municipal Engineering |
| Civil Engineering | Office Training |
| Clerk of Works | Plastics |
| Coal Mining | Plumbing |
| Commercial Art | Quantity Surveying |
| Commercial Training | Radio Engineering |
| Concrete Engineering | Radio Service Eng. |
| Diesel Engines | Refrigeration |
| Draughtsmanship (state which branch) | Salesmanship |
| Electric Power, Lighting, Transmission and Traction | Sales Management |
| Electrical Engineering | Sanitary and Domestic Engineering |
| Eng. Shop Practice | Scientific Management |
| Farming (Arable and Livestock) | Secretarial Work |
| Fire Engineering | Sheet-Metal Work |
| Foremanship | Short-Story Writing |
| Fuel Technology | Steam Power Design |
| Heating and Ventilation | Structural Steelwork |
| Horticulture | Surveying (state which branch) |
| Hydraulic Engineering | Television Technology |
| | Welding, Gas and Electric |
| | Woodworking Drawing |
| | Woodworking Machinists |
| | Works Engineering |
| | Works Management |

EXAMINATIONS—

Technical, Commercial, Professional, Educational, Civil Service, and General Certificate of Education

I.C.S. Examination Students are Coached until Successful

Generous discount to H.M. Forces

(State your Exom. on Coupon for free Booklet)



SUPER SCIENCE STORIES

British Edition

No. 12

Daring Feature-length Novel

PRISONER OF TIME

Polton Cross 4

Marked for death by the race she had created was the girl of eternal youth—the alluring, ephemeral daughter of time, who had lived five hundred years.

Outstanding Fantasy Novelette

THE MISSING DAY

Henry Hasse 22

Chained by the shackles of infinity stood the city of the living dead—awaiting that one day when its liberator would be born.

Dramatic Science Fiction

THE WORLD WITHIN

Nelson S. Bond 38

THE WEAPON

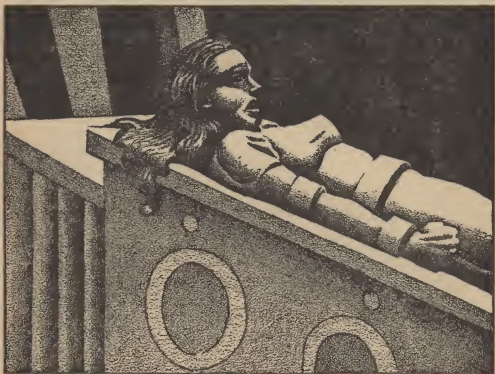
H. B. Ogden 50

DREADNOUGHTS OF DOOM **Henry Andrew Ackerman 56**

THE BEST IN SCIENCE FICTION

Published in England by Pemberton's (of Manchester), Ltd., and distributed by World Distributors (Manchester) Ltd., Clydesdale House, Turner Street, Manchester, by arrangement with the publishers. Published bi-monthly by Fictioneers, Inc., a subsidiary of Popular Publications, Inc., at 1125 E. Valle Avenue, Kokomo, Indiana. Editorial and executive offices, 305 East 42nd Street, New York City 17, N.Y. Henry Steeger, President. John J. McVarish, Treasurer. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Kokomo, Indiana. Copyright, 1942, by Fictioneers, Inc. Printed in England by C.W.S. Ltd., Reddish, Stockport. Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

PRISONER OF TIME



CHAPTER I

SCIENCE, UNLIMITED

★

Five hundred years had she waited, the girl of eternal youth, to live out her life span in a terrible tomorrow—marked for death by the race she had created!

★

LUCY GRANTHAM stared in abject terror at the steadily leveled weapon aimed directly at her heart. It was not an ordinary automatic; it was not the sort of weapon she had ever seen before. Everything owned and created by Bryce Field was far advanced of normal. He was a master-scientist, a demon, cruel, ruthless. That much the girl knew.

Her eyes moved slowly from the weapon to Bryce Field's face. It was lean-jawed,

By
**POLTON
CROSS**



sunken-eyed. Lank, untidy hair sprawled across his massive forehead. Behind his spare, sinewy form sprawled the instrument-littered wall of this deep underground cavern.

"So you thought you could play around with the affections of Bryce Field, did you?" he asked slowly. "You thought you could make love to me, get me wanting you madly, then kick me out! Yes, kick me out for that two-cent salesman!"

"Bryce, listen to me!" Lucy's voice was trembling, imploring, as she made a hesitant step forward. "I married Reggie Dell because I love him. I never could love

you; you are too clever, too brilliantly scientific—"

"Shut up!" Field thrust out his hand and sent the girl sprawling to the cavern floor. He went on savagely, "I called for you today to take you for a ride, you thought. Just old friends with a lot to say to each other! Old friends!" He spat the words. "I called to bring you here, deep underground, where you are now. I'm going to show you what it means to stand me up, Lucy. I've planned a mighty punishment for you!"

The girl stared up at him from the floor her blue eyes filled with horror, panic.

'You're mad, Bryce! Stark mad! Other-wise you—'

"Perhaps I am mad with jealousy," he admitted callously. "All I know is that if I can't have you, then neither shall Reginald Dell, or anyone else! You didn't like my science, you say. You will like it even less by the time I'm through with you!"

Stooping suddenly, he reached down and caught the girl's arm, dragged her to her feet. Brutally he sent her stumbling through the cavern doorway into yet another cavern.

Lucy stared around dazedly upon scientific machinery she could not hope to understand. Fear, overwhelming and complete, surged through her being as Field followed her in, locking the door behind him.

He stood with his back to it, his smile gashing his face like a crooked scar.

"This is one time, my dear," he said slowly, "when you will listen, and listen well, to some science. Take a look about you, upon these tubes, these magnets, that table with the straps."

She stared at the places indicated as though mesmerized. Then she found her tongue suddenly.

"Bryce, you've got to let me out of here!" Her voice was a hoarse scream. "You dare not do anything to me! You dare not, I say! Reggie will find you and—"

"Reggie!" Bryce Field sneered. "That miserable, narrow-browed dolt? What do you think he could do to me, one of the greatest scientists this age has ever known? No, my dear, he will do nothing. What is more, when I am finished with you I shall strike him down. Yes, him—and that squealing little brat you brought into the world. I shall destroy all three of you!"

As the girl stared at him with misty, hopeless eyes, he went on, "You have only yourself to blame, Lucy. You could have had me and all the power and wealth science has brought me. You chose differently—and for that I have decided there is a price!"

"Who are you to decide my life?" Lucy asked frantically. Flinging herself forward, she drove her puny fists into his granite-

like face. He did not budge an inch, but finally he threw her away from him.

"Mad," she whispered. "Always an ego-maniac, and now it has completely gotten you! You're insane, Bryce! Insane!"

HE was motionless for a moment; then, suddenly putting aside his weapon, he strode forward, gripped the girl in his powerful arms and dumped her on the long steel table against which she had fallen. Before she realized what was happening, the straps upon it were being buckled into place, across her throat, her waist, her knees.

"Bryce," she whispered. "What are you going to do?"

"Plenty!" He surveyed her pinioned form and smiled coldly. "But first I've one or two things to tell you, things connected with that science you so detest.

"You are going on a long journey, my dear," he finished. "So long a journey that even I, master-scientist, do not know where it will end. A journey into the future—alone!"

The girl wriggled desperately in the straps, relaxed again with rasping breath. Her eyes fixed themselves on Bryce Field's merciless visage.

"You, Lucy, shall be the victim of entropy!" he said softly. "Naturally, you don't know what entropy is, do you?"

"You know I don't!" she shrieked. "Bryce, stop torturing me like this. Let me go!"

"Entropy," he stated calmly, as though delivering a lecture, "is the increasing disorder of the universe, the process by which the universe gradually moves towards thermodynamic equilibrium. It can be likened to a perpetual shuffling, the disorder getting worse with every shuffle. Just like disordering a deck of cards when playing bridge with Reggie and you thin-brained friends."

"Bryce, Bryce, in God's name—"

"If only you had read Eddington while at school you might know something about entropy," Bryce Field said. "However, I have made it as clear as I can. Recently—" His tone changed to grim menace—"I fell to wondering what would happen if I

created a non-entropy state, wherein nothing ever happened! So I decided to create a specified area—in this cavern to be exact—wherein molecular shuffling would achieve sudden and absolute equilibrium, a space wherein the ultimate of entropy would be reached instantly, instead of in a thousand, a million, ten million years' time. Do you understand me?"

Lucy was beyond answering.

"Yes," he said, his voice harsh with grim triumph, "I discovered how to create an entropy globe—a globe of force whose walls have attained absolute equilibrium, whose vibrations extend inwards to everything inside the globe. Therefore, whatever is in the globe will be plunged into a state of non-time. Entropy will be halted. Progress will stop!

"You," he said slowly, "are going to be in that globe, Lucy! At your feet is one magnet, at your head another. Between them they will build up the hemisphere of the entropy globe, and within it time for you will cease to be. You will be plunged into an eternal 'now' from which release may never come—or, if it does, it will be at a far distant time when scientists as clever as I find the way to unlock your prison."

"Bryce, I beg of you," Lucy implored huskily. "Let me go! I'll do anything you want! Anything! I'll divorce Reggie—But you can't do this to me! I've so much to live for. My baby, the future. *You can't do it!*"

"On the wall there," he said impersonally, "is a calendar, placed so I hope you can see it. See the date? Seventeenth of July, Nineteen Forty-one. Remember that well!"

"Bryce! You cannot—"

He flung a switch, keeping clear of the table as he did so. Immediately an impalpable bubble of unknown forces—clearer than glass—enclosed the girl completely, swallowed up the steel table on which she lay. She was stopped in mid-motion of raising her head, her last sentence truncated.

BRYCE FIELD waited a moment or two, brooding eyes on the many gauges; then he turned and moved slowly to her, stood contemplating her.

Her lips were slightly parted; her blue eyes still stared at him, unseeing—eyes that were frozen and yet somehow still alive. Bryce Field's gaze went up and down her slim form in its brown silk frock, along the steel table, over the four leather straps that bound her, to the beechwood cradle that was supporting her head and shoulders.

Bryce Field smiled the smile of the godless when he saw her gold wristwatch had stopped at exactly 4:15. Time was no more inside that globe. Entropy was halted by reason of the globe's walls themselves having already achieved the ultimate of shuffling in their constitution.

"A year—fifty years—fifty centuries." Bryce Field said the words half to himself.

Then he turned back to his switchboard and examined the maze of instruments minutely. He waited perhaps half an hour, then cut the power out of the magnets at either end of the girl. A low, exultant sigh escaped him as he saw that the globe remained where it was, self-sustained, eternally balanced, a small foretaste of what the universe itself must some day achieve by natural means.

"If there is a key to open it—a random element to restore the shuffling—I do not know of it, nor do I want it. None—none shall unlock this prison!"

Bryce Field nodded to himself, then, pulling out a plunger, he waited a moment and stepped back. In a sudden blaze of light and explosion the entire switchboard blew itself to atoms, tearing out part of the wall with it.

Field turned to the mighty door of the cavern, took one last look at the motionless girl in the motionless globe. Then he closed the door upon her and locked it. With the face of a dead man he went silently through the adjoining cavern, into the tunnel that led to the surface.

"Dell and the brat," he murmured. "They must go too—"

But the thought was dashed from his mind as there suddenly came a vast and ominous rumbling. He looked up with a

start, flashing the beam of his torch. He was in time to see the tunnel roof fissuring along its whole length. In a flash he realized what had occurred, remembering the crack in the cavern wall which had followed the wrecking of the switchboard. The underground place had been savagely shaken, and now—

The truth had no sooner formulated in his mind than he saw a vast mass of rubble and stone hurtling down towards him.

CHAPTER II

TIME BARRIER

CLEM BRADLEY, chief of the Roton Gun Engineering Company, mopped his face with his sweat rag and settled his steel helmet a bit more comfortably upon his head.

"Guess another thousand feet should see this foundation space fully cleared," he commented, gazing around at the surging activity. "We've been cutting clean for the last month, and the next push should finish it."

Square-jawed, thick-necked Buck Cardew nodded. From appearances there was little to choose between the two men. They were both big and muscular. But in Clem Bradley there reposed the brains of the team, brains whose scientific bent had created the amazing blast gun which was the basis for the Roton Gun Company. In Buck Cardew lay the brawn and iron fists necessary to control endless gangs of men at work.

"Yes, this job came as manna from heaven," Clem went on reflectively. "If the City Planners hadn't decided to put a mile-high building here we'd still be trying to sell our gun to a bunch of money-grubbing misfits. As it is, we're sitting pretty. The company's on its feet to stay. Even the Master acknowledges that."

"Yeah," Cardew agreed; then he let out a throaty bellow that went echoing across the great hollowed space. "Hey, there! What in hell are you guys wasting time about over there? Stop standing around talking and get on with the job!"

"Can't!" megaphoned the foreman. "There's a barrier here that even the blast gun won't cut! Come and take a look."

"He's nuts," Clem growled. "That gun of mine will blast anything in Earth or space. Maybe they're plumb sick of groping about down here! And I don't blame 'em!"

"They're paid for it, good and plenty," Buck Cardew retorted. "I'll soon settle 'em. Let's go!"

They strode through the loose rubble to the flood-lit space where the men were standing around the apparatus. Cardew put his hands on his hips and stared at the barrier facing the gun's blunted nozzle.

"Turn it on there!" he ordered.

A blasting, ear-splitting roar instantly followed, but that stream of livid, tearing energy, which had been known to go through successive walls of steel, granite, and diamond, simply deflected itself in a coiling streamer of blinding blue sparks.

"Off!" Clem yelled. "What do you want to do, blow us up with a backlash?" Then, as the commotion died down, he clambered to the barrier and examined it carefully. It seemed to be black.

"Kill those lights!" he ordered. The moment they went out and darkness descended it became clear that the area was not black, but swarming with violet radiance. There seemed to be a multitude of pinpricks of light floating around in a vast bowl.

"What in hell is it?" Cardew demanded as the light resumed.

"Stated simply—force," Clem answered, puzzled. "Force built up into a resilient wall which simply deflects our gun blast, much the same as the force-shields on our modern spaceships deflect meteorites. Hm-m, looks like we've struck something. Have to weigh it up."

He stepped back and started making a rough plan and sketch of the situation. Then, under his directions, prompted by Buck Cardew's bellowing voice, the gun was trained until it hit ordinary rock around the edge of the area. Gradually they forced a way around until the blue area remained isolated.

Mystified, the two men clambered

through into a deep cavern and stood staring in the light of their helmet lamps.

"Wow!" Cardew ejaculated suddenly. "Take a look!"

CLEM swung, then his jaw dropped as they gazed through the impenetrable wall of the thing that had deflected their gun. There was a girl, strapped to a table, her eyes staring unseeingly, her pretty face terrified.

"She isn't moving," Cardew whispered blankly. "Say, she looks as though she's imprisoned inside a globe of force. But—but who the devil is she, anyway?" he went on in amazement. "Look at her clothes! Girls haven't worn stuff like that for—centuries!"

Clem's mind swung instantly to the scientific implications. He hurried around the cavern, examining it quickly, the astounded engineers piling in after him and dazedly contemplating the girl in the globe.

At last Clem halted, rubbing his jaw.

"Bits and pieces lying about suggest that this place was once a laboratory. God knows how long ago, though. What we've got to do is break down this globe of force somehow."

"How?" Cardew demanded. "If a blast gun won't do it, it's certain nothing else will."

"If it was created artificially—and it probably was—it can be uncreated," Clem replied. He turned to the men. "Okay, boys, keep on with your job. We've still got a time schedule, remember. I'll use instruments on this and see what I can find out."

The foreman nodded and blasting resumed, cutting a vast path at the back of the place. Clem gave quick instructions and had various instruments brought in to him. He figured steadily from their readings, quite oblivious to the shattering din going on around him. After a while Cardew came to his side, hands on hips.

"Well?" His keen eyes aimed eager questions. "Any clues?"

"Incredible ones," Clem answered in a marveling voice. "It looks as though somebody way back in the past solved a

scientific problem which still puzzles us even today. That globe, if the readings here are true, registers zero! It isn't there!"

"You crazy, or am I?" Cardew asked bluntly. "Of course it's damn well there! We can see it!"

Clem waved to the instruments. Sure enough they all registered zero. Cardew scratched his head.

"What the devil is the explanation then?"

"It's something, so far as I can figure, that has no entropy. If that is so, it means it has reached absolute equilibrium. There is no interchange of energy to register. A little universe all on its own which has achieved the state our own universe will one day attain. It is the same now, possibly, as when it came into being. It is apart from all known forces for that very reason. It is apart from light, radiation, heat—everything. You see it cannot assimilate anything more because it is assimilated to maximum. Nothing can go into this bubble, or out of it."

Cardew blew out his cheeks expressively. "Then how do we smash it?"

"Only one thing we can perhaps do—warp it. Gravitation alone is independent of all other forces. Today we know that for certain. Gravity is a warp in spacetime, not a force. We have gravitator-plates down here for shifting rocks. Maybe twin stresses brought to a focus would warp this ball of absolute force and cause a rupture—Yeah, it's worth trying!" Clem finished quickly. "This is the weirdest set-up ever!"

More instructions followed, and gravitator-screens of vast size were erected in the positions Clem stipulated. A past master in stresses and strains, he knew just what he was doing; but whether it would work on the globe or not was problematical. It was an hour before he was satisfied, Cardew getting more impatient all the time; but at last the signal was given.

Simultaneously the power was flung on, a power duplicating exactly the etheric warps of gravitation itself. What happened then was never to be forgotten!

THE globe burst with an explosion that hurled the men flat against the wall, pinning them there under an outflowing wave of gigantic, hair-bristling force. The screens overturned and went crashing into the rocks. A rumble, as of deep thunder, rolled throughout the underground cavern and died away in the far distance.

Slowly the sense of released electrical tension began to abate, but the place crawled with the odor of ozone. Clem stood up gradually, turned, expecting to see the girl blasted to pieces. But she was alive, moving.

"—do this to me!" she cried desperately, and strained and wriggled in her straps.

"Not only alive, but fighting!" Cardew whispered, seizing Clem's arm "Why didn't she die when that thing blew up?"

"Because the force expanded outwards from her. She was as safe as though in the dead center of a cyclone."

Clem strode forward and gazed at the girl's face. A most extraordinary expression came over her delicate features as she stared into the grimy visages under the steel helmets. Her blue eyes widened in further alarm.

"What—who—who are you?" she breathed weakly, going limp in the straps. "Where is Bryce?"

"Bryce?" Clem shot her a baffled glance; then leaning over he unbuckled the straps and raised her gently. He fished in his hip pocket, spun the top from a flask, and held the opening to her lips. The fiery liquid, something she had never tasted before, went through her veins like liquid dynamite, set her heart and nerves bounding with sudden life.

Flushed, she looked in bewilderment at the puzzled men.

"Where is Bryce?" she insisted. "Bryce Field. He locked me in here."

"Never heard of him," Cardew said bluntly. "We—"

Clem cut him short, looked at the girl with his serious gray eyes.

"You said something just as you recovered. What was it?"

"I said 'Bryce, you cannot do this to me!'"

"No." Clem shook his head. "You only

said '—do this to me!' The first three words were missing. I remember because it sounded so odd. I presume this Bryce Field was in here when you started to say those words?"

"Yes—yes, of course he was. He was going to throw a power switch which would have—"

The girl's voice trailed off as she stared round the cavern at the unfamiliar blasting machinery.

"But—but everything's different!" Her voice caught a little. "There is no switch-board now, no door. Who are you?"

When they did not answer, her gaze swung to the calendar—or rather to the place where it should have been. There was only a mass of crumbled rock.

"There was a calendar there. It said July seventeenth, Nineteen Forty-one," she gasped out. "Where has it gone?"

"Nineteen Forty-one!" Cardew yelled. "Hell! No wonder you're in such old-fashioned clothes! Do you realize that this is August ninth, Twenty-four Fifty?"

The color went from her face. "Twenty-four fifty," she repeated mechanically. "Why, that's—that's five hundred years! It can't be true! It can't!"

"I'm afraid it is," said Clem quietly, studying her. "But we can't even begin to understand until we hear your side of the story. Who are you? What happened in here?"

"I'm Lucy Grantham and—" Slowly the story unfolded. The men listened in grim silence, looked at each other when it was over.

"Wish I could have taken a sock at that Bryce Field," said Cardew reflectively, his fists clenched. "I'd have smeared him all over the cavern wall."

"Five centuries!" Lucy repeated again, aghast. "I don't understand it! What am I to do? Do you realize what has really happened to me?"

"You felt nothing during this enormous lapse of time?" Clem asked thoughtfully.

"Nothing whatever. Except that I seem to remember I felt a passing wave of dizziness when Bryce threw in that switch. Even then I hardly realized that he had thrown the switch. I could see nothing

through the bubble wall. Then, in what seemed a matter of seconds, certainly no longer, you appeared. And so now," the girl finished hopelessly, "I am utterly alone. My husband long since dead; and my baby too, presuming he grew up."

"Unfortunately," Clem sighed, "we can't put back the clock. All we can do is offer you our hospitality." He rubbed his jaw uncertainly, explained rather uneasily, "You see, things have changed a lot while you have been a prisoner. Today everybody is tabulated and indexed, and you're a sort of odd girl out. If your lack of an index card is discovered you may be—executed," he finished somberly.

"Executed!" Lucy stared at them in horror.

"Anybody without an index card, without even a proven line of descent, like you, is deemed outcast by the Governing Council or else the Master himself, and promptly wiped out. Spying and sabotage is crushed that way. We have to be very careful. A new war is threatening."

"There is still war?" the girl asked wearily. "There was a similar state of affairs when I was trapped. Europe was in a ferment; so was Asia—"

Clem smiled faintly. "Long forgotten, Miss Grantham. This is Earth against Venus; something to do with planetary concessions. But it's war just the same, and that being so your position is extremely difficult."

"But surely you could explain the situation?"

"Not on the basis of what I know so far," Clem sighed. "I don't even begin to understand the genius of this man Bryce Field. I'll have to work out exactly what he did and then submit the proof to the Master. Once that is passed you will get City status and will be quite safe. But in the meantime—"

"There's my wife," Buck Cardew said. "She was to have Worker Thirty-nine Zee to assist her in house duties. I could arrange it that Thirty-nine Zee is bought off and Miss Grantham takes her place. It's been done before, and could be again. How about it?"

"Good!" Clem assented. "We'll do that;

then I can keep in touch with you," he added, looking at the girl. "For the moment you had better stay here with us and then come along home after dark. We'll look after you—and you'll have an awful lot to see," he finished. "Things have changed a lot since Nineteen Forty-one."

"I can imagine," Lucy said, and gave her first smile.

IN the wilderness of the City's major power room, Chief Engineer Collins studied the peculiarity with cold blue eyes. For the first time in thirty years' supervision of this master powerhouse something was wrong. The smooth night and day rhythm of the giant engines, fostered and tendered by slender robots, was being interrupted. There was the slightest flaw in the uptake of power. Perhaps it was only carbon dust. It had happened before—but that was years ago.

Collins summoned testing-robots. They came up with their many instruments and gathered about him, obeying all the commands he gave into their almost reasoning brain-pans. With mathematical exactitude, far keener than even his masterly reasoning could produce, they discovered the flaw and handed out the report.

"Intermission fault of one ten-thousandth of a second," Collins mused. "Bad! Definitely bad!"

He slammed in switches and was connected immediately with slave power-houses in other parts of the city.

"What's your power report?" he snapped.

It was given him immediately. There was nothing wrong there, but there was here, and, what was more, it was getting worse. The sweetly humming giant had taken on a definite lobbing sound, like the thud of a flat on a smooth road.

Struck with the unbelievable thought that there might be a flaw in the steel, Collins turned to the gigantic balance wheel which formed the balance of the master-engine. He had just reached it when the thing happened.

A pear-shaped swelling appeared suddenly on the edge of the wheel, only visible as a mist with the wheel's rotation. It grew

at lightning speed—and then exploded! Flung by centrifugal force, mighty pieces of metal went to all parts of the powerhouse. One struck Collins clean in the face and dropped him dead where he stood. The robots looked on impartially, their guiding genius lying mangled on the floor.

Immediately the other engines ceased to work as an automatic contact breaker clamped down on the whole area. The alarms rang. The emergency bulb went up on the desk of the chief power engineer at City Center.

Breakdown, for the first time in thirty years. Incredible!

CLEM BRADLEY, Cardew, and the girl were in Bradley's little autobus doing two hundred miles an hour down the traffic way bridge to City Centre when the power went off. All of a sudden the vast, long line of light and steel which had held the girl in thrall went into total darkness.

"What in hell—!"

Clem let out a gasp of amazement, then his hands tightened instantly on the switches. Never in his experience had he met up with a sudden blackout like this. He slammed on the emergency brake, but either he slammed too hard or the steel was faulty, for the pedal snapped right off under the pressure! He was too astounded, too desperately busy to exclaim about it. Like a madman he tried to cut down the power of the engine as they raced onwards into the unrelieved dark bridge girders whipping past them against the stars.

"Hey, stop the damned thing!" Buck Cardew yelled. "There may be something ahead, and at this speed—Where's your searchlamp?"

"Switch it on for me," Clem panted. "I've all I can handle."

The girl sat in frozen alarm with wind rushing past her face as Cardew fumbled. Then suddenly the blinding cold-light brilliance split the dark ahead.

"Look!" Lucy screamed.

But Clem had already seen it too—the unbelievable—a titanic fissure glowing oddly across the traffic way itself. The bridge was breaking in two! And below

was a mile drop into the brimming waters of the diverted Hudson.

"Jump it!" Cardew yelled. "Full belt! You'll just make it!"

The why and wherefore flashed unanswered in Clem's brain. He gave the autobus all it had, shot over the crumbling edge of the fissure, and slammed with shattering force onto the other side of the bridge. So enormous was the shock the front wheel axle snapped like a carrot, slewed the car around, plastered it with splintering impact against the cross girders at the bridge side.

Then it came to a standstill, somehow still upright.

"Wow!" Cardew whistled. "That was close—Hey, you okay?"

He heaved Lucy up beside him.

"Yes, I'm all right, but—" She stared in terror at the waters far below, then back at the still enlarging gap in the bridge. "But—but what's wrong?" she finished.

"Search me!" Clem snapped. "First my brake pedal broke like a match stick; then this front axle gave way, and the bridge too is rapidly—"

He broke off and stared as headlights flashed into view on the distant dark stretch.

"They'll go over!" he yelled, vaulting over the car's side. "Got to warn them!"

He went pelting back along the bridge, pulling out the safety red light he used underground as he went. Desperately he waved it to and fro. He saw, as the first vehicle came hurtling nearer, that it was a public service bus. Closer—closer, until he saw its number plate. It registered mechanically in his mind: KT/897.

"Stop!" he screamed helplessly. "Stop, you fool!"

But the driver saw his danger too late. The bus went plunging over the edge of the broken bridge, the private autobus behind it following suit. Dazed with horror, Clem watched both vehicles go hurtling down into the wastes below. The cries of the doomed people came up to him like a ghastly echo.

"My God!" he whispered. "Oh, my God—"

"Can't call the emergency station,

either," Cardew said, coming up. "If the bridge is cracked, the wires will be too." He stopped, his eyes goggling as he stared at the fissure. "Will you look at that? The crack's widening!"

"I know." Clem's voice was grim as he shifted his eyes from the depths below. "There's something damnably wrong here. First the light and power goes off; then this—"

"Altogether," Lucy said quietly, "an inauspicious beginning for the wonder world of Twenty-four Fifty!"

Clem did not even seem to hear her.

"It's incredible that steel should start behaving this way," he whispered. "Forgetting the brake and axle on the autobus for the moment, take the case of this bridge. For a hundred years it has been regularly overhauled. Yet now it looks as though it has atomic blight. Remember, Buck, we had trouble with a blight some years back?"

"SURE, but we got over that. Still, it does look similar."

The three of them turned suddenly as an emergency official car came speeding up from behind them. A uniformed bridge officer jumped out.

"What's gone wrong here?" Then, with characteristic speed, he took in the situation, turned to his men. "Send a radio call to have the bridge closed at both ends. Had a smash, eh?" he went on, eyeing the crumpled autobus.

"Yeah, just leapt the gap in time," Clem said.

"I don't get this set-up at all," the officer went on. "This steel here is like treacle, just melting away— Same thing happened in the chief powerhouse, I hear. Flywheel went soft or something and just blew apart. Well, let's have your index cards."

Cardew handed over his while Clem tried to do some fast thinking for the anxious girl. The officer got to the girl at last. She looked at him uneasily, fumbling needlessly in the borrowed tunic she was wearing.

"Well, well, miss, come on!" the officer snapped. "I haven't all night to waste!"

"I—er—I seem to have lost my card."

"Sure you did," Clem said, trying hard to sound at ease. "Remember, when we were out of town something fell? Must have been your card!"

The officer looked suspicious. "Number?"

"Thirty-nine Zee," Clem said. "She—"

"Zee is Domestic Classification," the officer snapped. "What is she doing way out here, coming from the city outskirts?"

"Just a ride," said Buck Cardew steadily.

"Hmmm— See you produce your index card at Headquarters tomorrow, without fail." The officer handed her a ticket. "Now you'd all three better get off the bridge. What's left of your car will be returned to you later. Move along, please."

They turned away, glanced at each other in the dim light.

"That," said Cardew, "was an uncomfortably near thing. But I guess we can square it all right tomorrow with Thirty-nine's card."

"Yeah," Clem muttered absently.

"Queer," the girl said, "that a bridge of steel should melt like that, and a powerhouse flywheel, and the brake on your car! Or is it something quite natural in this weird world of yours?"

"It's a mystery," Clem said.

"Venusian spies, more like it," Cardew grunted. "They are every place, honeycombing the Earth. Some new scientific device of theirs, I'll wager."

They finished the rest of the journey on foot, and mainly in silence, and by the time they reached Cardew's home in the city's heart the lights had come up again and power was working normally.

Mrs. Cardew, slim, dark, and practical, was clearly discomfited by the happening—in fact, very discomfited, considering.

"Something the matter, Eva?" Cardew asked her in surprise. "Outside of the blackout, I mean?"

"Yes, Buck, I—" She stopped, looked past Clem Bradley to the girl.

"Friend of mine," Clem smiled. "Miss Grantham. We found her in rather peculiar circumstances and— Well, we'll need you to help us."

"Which you can," Cardew said reassuringly. "This girl has got to have protection,

and she can't get it anywhere better than right here. You see," he went on more slowly, "she is really a girl from way back—Nineteen Forty-one! An ancient American. Remember America in the history recorders?"

Eva Cardew stared blankly; then she stared some more when the full story was told to her. Finally she looked at Lucy for confirmation, and the girl nodded.

"I'm afraid it's true," she sighed. "Mr. Cardew thought we could contrive to get an index card from Thirty-nine Zee—"

"That," said Eva Cardew seriously, "is what has been making me so worried. Doubly so now, indeed. A report has been issued over the radio that thirty people met their deaths tonight in the big bridge collapse. A whole bus load—and Thirty-nine Zee was among them. That's why I was looking so bothered when you arrived."

"Was it—was it Bus KT/897?" Clem whispered.

"Yes."

"Good God!" Clem said aghast. "The authorities know that Thirty-nine Zee is dead! And we told them—we told that officer—"

"Yeah," Cardew said, appalled. "So we did."

TO the north of the city, Caleb Walsh, master-agriculturist, walked slowly down the vast synthetic area devoted entirely to the cultivation of extra hard beechwood trees. Here, under his care, government-controlled, were some two hundred saplings fed by artificial sunlight and high-powered nitrates and fertilizers.

Then, as he continued his rounds, he wheeled suddenly at the sound of smashing glass. He fell back, astounded, eyes goggling.

Four of the tender saplings had suddenly grown to titanic proportions and smashed their way through the lofty roof! It was impossible!

Yet it was there.

He went forward slowly, swallowing hard in his throat, stared up at the giants rearing through the broken glass. Their side branches too had thrust forth in-

credibly and smashed down all the young trees in the neighboring area. . . .

Caleb Walsh reached for the visiphone with a hand that shook; he made a report in a cracked voice to the Controller of Agriculture. The controller listened sympathetically because it was not the only report he had received. From all parts of the country within a hundred-mile radius of the city, it appeared, news kept coming in of beech trees suddenly going haywire.

There was the beech tree at an old-world farm some distance out of the town, for instance. With his own eyes the astounded owner had seen it rear from a tiny sapling against the moonlight to a mammoth giant overshadowing his home. Being an old-world man, he wondered if there had been some truth, after all, in Jack and the Beanstalk story.

CHAPTER III

THE PAST IS PRESENT

CLEM BRADLEY, though he left Lucy Grantham at the Cardew apartment for the night, hardly had any sleep. A variety of things twisted through his mind. Mainly, he was worried about the girl: her identity would have to be proven somehow, and with the unexpected death of Thirty-nine Zee it presented an almost insoluble problem.

After a sleepless night he ate breakfast. The news was on and he listened in amazement to a long record of inexplicable happenings. The W Bridge, which he had seen fissure the previous night, had eaten itself right away through the center—then the disturbance had stopped as mysteriously as it had begun, leaving the rest of the steel intact. Engineers were already rebuilding it, but all traffic was detoured.

Further announcements of gigantically enlarged beech trees caused Clem increasing wonder; and at the final narrative he did not know whether to laugh or be dismayed.

"An extraordinary series of incidents are reported from City Center as occurring

last night," the announcer said. "Several men and women, for instance, found themselves suddenly without any shoes as their footwear melted into thin air! The same thing happened also to men's pants, belts, and women's handbags. The unfortunate men dashed for the nearest safety; women screamed that they had been robbed. But neither belts nor bags were found later, though in the latter case the vanishing bags' belongings were found flung about the sidewalks. Thousands took autobuses home to avoid any further walking in stocking feet. A well-known war officer, inspecting our defenses in case of Venusian invasion, found himself with his ray gun charges and ray gun itself lying on the floor. Every supporting belt had disappeared.

"From Sector Fifty-two there is also news of a cattle disease. It appears that pigs, cows, bulls, oxen, and various other varieties of animals are dying. The disease seems to be a form of old age, which so far has the veterinary experts baffled. But the authorities are beginning to suspect Venusian workers in our midst who are thus deliberately undermining our social structure. Any spies found will be mercilessly dealt with—"

Bradley switched the news off and sat thinking for a moment or two; then he hurriedly finished his breakfast and made haste for Buck Cardew's place.

"Guess we'll have to detour," he said, when they were ready to leave, "according to the news. But what about Miss Grantham here. Any angles?"

"One," Clem answered briefly. "The only safe place until we dope out some satisfactory reason for the authorities is to take her to work with us. Once we have her underground she will be safe. Not even the authorities can get down there without my permission. Too dangerous."

"Right!" Cardew assented; then, glancing at the girl, "You'd better get ready."

She nodded and hurried off. Cardew looked at Clem seriously.

"Looks like a war isn't far off, eh?"

"Is it?" Clem looked surprised. "I didn't hear all the news—"

"Yeah, it's bad," Cardew muttered.

"Our ambassador to Venus—Leslie Hurst—says the situation has become worse. But say, did you hear about those other queer happenings? Missing shoes—"

"Yes, I heard that. And somehow—" Clem stopped, then gave a little shrug. "Somehow, silly though it sounds, I'm beginning to think Lucy Grantham has something to do with all of this!"

"What! You're crazy, man! Or do you mean the set-up we found her in was a phony, and that she is a Venusian agent or something?"

"No, no, nothing like that," Clem said irritably. "Get your mind off spies for a bit. What I mean—"

He broke off as the girl came hurrying back.

"Let's go," he said briefly.

BUT at the end of the detour through the city, Bradley's neat scheme for wangling the girl out of the clutches of the law fell to pieces. He looked at Cardew, worried, as ahead of them loomed an armed cordon guarding a barrier, and each autobus or pedestrian who went through was being asked for his or her index card.

"Hell!" Cardew growled expressively. "We've sure driven right into it! And no way back either," he finished in anxiety as he saw the stream of autobuses banked up behind them.

"Have to lie our way through as best we can; that's all," Clem shrugged. "I suppose this is the result of the odd happenings. There is a new spy clean-up going on. We'll get by—somehow."

But as they came closer all hope collapsed, for the chief officer in charge of the examination was the very one they had encountered on the W Bridge the night before.

"Oh, you again!" he said grimly, as he beheld the three set faces in Cardew's autobus. "And you—" He looked at the girl—"said you were Thirty-nine Zee last night. We were giving you time to clear up the mistake; as it is, you can clear it up now. Thirty-nine Zee is dead. What's your explanation?"

"We can explain the circumstances per-

factly," Clem. "It is a case of mistaken identity and—"

"Case of spying you mean! What's more, you three are going to answer several questions. Come on. Get out of that bus!"

The officer yanked out his gun menacingly; but the next second Cardew's mighty fist lifted suddenly from the driver's control and plunged clean into the man's face. He went flying backwards off the running board and collapsed in the dust. Without a second's pause, Cardew flung in the switches and sent the car bounding forward.

It whipped through the line of officers tugging at their ray guns. Within seconds they were left behind. Clinging to the steering gear, Cardew stared ahead with grim eyes, dodged around and behind the traffic in front of him, at last began to lose himself in the swirling tide flowing out of the city's heart.

"You dope!" Clem panted. "Do you realize what sort of a jam we'll get into for this? We'll be hauled up! We can't escape—"

"Give them a run for their money anyway," Cardew retorted. "Better all three of us are in it than just Lucy."

Clem became silent, mainly because he agreed with his impulsive friend. The girl herself said nothing, sat with tight lips between the two men, realizing more than ever the complicated, dangerous tangle she had gotten into since arriving in this amazing world of 2450.

"Okay, here we go," Cardew said at last, and twisted the little machine off into a side alley, thereby joining up with the normal route beyond the sundered bridge. Continuing at the same demoniacal pace, it was not long before he gained the immense underground slope leading to the site of works. Once below, speeding through the long dark tunnels, they all three began to breathe more freely.

"All set so far," Clem said grimly, clambering out at last. "Get the boys to work, Buck. Right now I've got some figuring to do, figuring that may save the three of us from the lethal chamber. I've got an idea how we can explain away

Lucy's presence. Carry on while I work it out. No telling when the police dragnet will catch up on us—yes, even down here."

FAR out in space, beyond the Asteroids, Commander Neil turned sharply as First Mate Swanton came hurrying into the control room.

"Something extraordinary has happened, sir! Can you spare a moment? Down in the storage rooms—"

"What about the storage rooms?" Neil searched the man's face quickly. It was more perplexed than he had ever seen it.

"Our cargo! Something's happened! Part of it stolen—"

"The gold!" Commander Neil gasped.

"And not only the gold, sir—"

Neil's bulldog jaw set squarely, and he hurried out at Swanton's side. They went down into the belly of the mighty transport ship, and along to Hold 16. Swanton tugged open the steel door and pointed.

"There were twenty-five bars of gold here, sir; now there are only twenty-two."

"This is incredible," Neil ejaculated, checking up. "Theft in the void is not even possible. We—"

"Then there is this, sir," Swanton went on, motioning to the numberless crates. "When we left Earth we had sixty cases full of live silkworms. Now six cases are empty and three more half empty."

"I could understand the gold being stolen," Neil said, totally baffled, "but silkworms! Even granting theft were at all possible, who the devil would want silkworms? They are only of use to Plutonians as edible matter, certainly not for silk. This," he finished grimly, "is going to need the best space investigator Earth has got."

He swung away, agitated, and back in the control room made space radio contact with Earth and reported the loss. The Controller for Space Exports listened to every detail; then he turned and switched the report over to the Master of the City.

The Master surveyed not only the silkworm reports, not only the story of gold vanishing in space—but other reports as well. Reports of gold vanishing from strong vaults in many parts of the city; of the death of cattle; the collapse of steel in

many places; the mystic affair of vanishing leather; the even greater problem of hypertrophied beech trees.

Finally, lips compressed, he flicked the switch of his desk communicator.

"Find Engineers Cardew and Bradley, of the Roton Gun Engineering Company, without delay," he snapped out. "Bring them here. And with them bring this unknown woman who masqueraded as Thirty-nine Zee."

THE armed guards appeared suddenly in the underground workings towards the close of the day, but though Clem and Cardew put up a stiff resistance they were finally forced to give in.

"Where's that woman you had with you?" demanded the self-same officer whom Cardew had eluded in the morning—and his cold eyes flashed over the expanse of underground working.

"Suppose you try and find out?" Clem asked bluntly. "She is innocent of any harm, and no matter what the law does, or the master either, she stays safely hidden. Understand?"

"You're a fool," the guard shrugged. "She'll be found. Search the place!" he addressed to his men.

Clem glanced significantly at Cardew. The girl, concealed in a high niche of the wilderness of workings, was not likely to be even seen, let alone captured, and the boys on the job would see she was kept safe and well provisioned, since they were on a night and day shift.

"Let's go," the guard snapped at last, nonplussed. "Can't stop here all the damned night. 'Go on, you two—move!'"

He led the way to the official autobus in the tunnel, and in a few minutes it was whirling them through the city again. Finally they were taken into the presence of the Master.

He hardly glanced up from his lake of papers as he spoke; but his hand reached out and pressed a button so that the entire interview might be recorded.

"What is your explanation, gentlemen, for shielding a woman from the authorities because she has no official index card? What is your excuse for striking an officer

of the law? More directly—"The Master looked up for a moment with cold eyes—"what is this woman's connection with mysterious acts of sabotage which began last night? Grave questions, grave implications—for you!"

"The woman," Clem said curtly, "is Lucy Grantham, of the year Nineteen Forty-one."

"Facetiousness will not help the case."

"You misunderstand me, sir," Clem said. "It is because she is a woman of Nineteen Forty-one that these things have been happening."

"I fail," said the Master icily, "to see the connection. But for your especial benefit, so that you may realize the seriousness of your behavior, I will inform you that Venusian invasion—according to Ambassador Hurst's report some days ago—is imminent at any moment. This Earth of ours is threatened by attack from the most complete scientific armada in history. It is a well-known fact that Earth is riddled with spies, of which this woman—who

STOP SMOKING

In 3 days, or money back. Safe, pleasant, permanent. The only scientific way. No will power necessary. Not a physical culture course. "Conquered the habit in 2½ days. Am delighted."—F.C. "Within two days I was free from the tobacco habit."—W.G. Improve your health, save pounds. Complete course 8/6 (or \$1.00 bill). Details 1/4d. stamp. Sent under plain cover. Stebbings, 28 (PT/15), Dean Road, London, N.W.2.



BODY BUILDING

Powerful Arms. Develop 2 to 6 inches of rippling muscle on your arms—or no cost. 2/6. **Powerful Chest.** Adds up to 6 inches across your chest. 2/6. **Muscular Legs.** Develops powerful shapely legs, muscular iron, well-built thighs. 2/6. **Dynamic Abdominal Strength.** This Course develops great strength and energy, prevents rupture. 2/6. The Four Courses, 10/6. How to make your own Home Gym, 7/6. List free. Stebbings Institute, 28 (PT/15), Dean Road, London, N.W.2.

BE TALLER

I Guarantee to increase: your height in 12 days or return your money. New discovery increases height 2 to 6 inches. (Gained 4½ inches in my height. My weight increased from 9 stone 4 lb. to 10 stone 8½ lb.)—F.D. Witham. "I have increased in stature from 5 feet 1 inch to 5 feet 4 inches, a matter of 3 inches."—H.C. Chesterfield. "My increase is 2 inches and I really do feel ALIVE."—B.T. Guaranteed harmless. Full course, 10/6. Air Mail, 15/6. Details 1/4d. stamp. Sent under plain cover. J. H. MORLEY (PT/15), Terry House, Naphill, High Wycombe.



Develop Self-Confidence — MASTER

JU-JITSU

You can get "tough" and make any attacker helpless with lightning speed—or money back. The Morley Rapid Ju-Jitsu Course teaches you all the knock-out blows, gives absolute mastery. Develops body, gives self-confidence. You can acquire this devastating weapon in a few weeks. For both sexes. Complete system 10/6 (\$1.50). Details 1/4d. J. H. MORLEY (PT/15), Terry House, Naphill, High Wycombe.

evidently fooled you into thinking she is a denizen of Nineteen Forty-one—is a particularly blundering example. Only since her appearance has gold started to vanish and steel shown grave structural faults. Obviously atomic control, at which the Venusians are adept. Then leather behaved queerly, and beech trees. Last of all we hear of a mysterious theft far out in space which not only included gold but silkworms. That, I confess, I fail to understand, but—"

"Gold—and silkworms!" Clem cried excitedly. "This cinches it! Now I know I am right!"

"Explain yourself!" the Master ordered.

Clem did so, gave in detail the story of the girl's inclosure in a non-entropy bubble just as she had told it to him. The Master listened in attentive silence because he was scientist enough to understand every point, but at the end of it he looked skeptical.

"The theory is possible, of course—but it still does not explain these acts of sabotage."

"It isn't sabotage, sir—it is natural law!" Clem cried. "I have spent today working out in detail a theory which I have had in mind since I found Miss Grantham. Now I'm sure it is right. You see, this scientist, Bryce Field, forgot something. If you place anything organic or inorganic in a field of non-time you destroy the entropy. Everything in the bubble was stopped dead still. No entropy went on at all. But each article in the bubble gave off the energy which we recognize as entropy. Therefore the energy was there, but imprisoned."

The Master nodded. "And so?"

"For five hundred years," Clem went on, "a girl in a silk frock lay on a steel cube. She was cradled in a beechwood rack and tied down by leather straps. She wore a gold wrist-watch and had a gold brooch. You see, sir? For five hundred years energy was given off, but it could not escape. Entropy was there, yet held stagnant. Hence, when the globe was shattered, the energy of entropy-change went out in an overpowering wave and sought out the original atomic formations from which it had sprung. It had to, in

order to catch up on the predestined entropy intended for those particular formations.

"What happened? Steel in the bridge went to blazes because of extreme age. It affected my car, too, because the steel that formed the girl's table came from the same ores which later were used to make a bridge. But the parts of the bridge made from other ores were untouched. Everything suddenly became five hundred years old. Trees shot up to five hundred years of age—those trees which were direct descendants of the tree that had made the beech cradle. Gold vanished because in five hundred years it had changed its atomic form; leather vanished because it was made from the skin of animals whose ancestors had provided the leather for the buckled straps. It worked through the whole line of descendants each time.

"Yes, even down to the silkworms," Clem finished. "They were the offsprings of the worms that had given the silk for Lucy's dress. Entropy caught up, right through the line again, evolved them five hundred years so that they vanished. Now, we hope, the trouble has achieved balance and the atomic set-ups are no longer a piece short in their normal progressive build-up."

"I believe," the Master said, after thinking for a long time, "that you are right. But you say the girl had a child? If that was so, her entropy surely would pass on through the child and all descendants, if any. Yet nobody has been affected."

"Either the child died without ever marrying, or else this entropy shuffle takes time to reach higher matter," Clem answered. "Surely she gave off energy, same as anything else—"

He stopped, astounded, gripped Cardew's arm.

Something strange was happening to the Master!

His face changed by miraculous shadings into a mass of seams! He seemed to be unable to move, held in the grip of the astounding metabolism suddenly coursing through him. Heat seemed to spread from him as his life-energy took a mighty

leap. With flashing seconds his iron gray hair went white; then he was bald.

His face caved in; the hands shrank to bony claws!

He spoke no word, but the last look in his masterful eyes was unforgettable. They were trying to understand: then they dimmed to burned-out coals. His skinny frame flopped on the desk. Nor did it stay there. Unguessable age crumbled it to dust, and an empty suit of clothes fell to the floor.

"My God!" whispered Cardew, his jaw lolling stupidly.

Bradley stood fighting to control himself. Then the desk light went up. He pressed the button and listened to a city report.

"Emergency Communication! Unexpected senility sweeping the city! Severe within hundred miles radius. Isolated instances in remoter areas. Please advise."

"Later," Clem said, simulating the Master's voice; then he switched off the receiver and turned a rather scared face.

"Get it?" he asked.

"Like hell!" Cardew was sweating visibly.

"Entropy again. That child of Lucy's must have had several children after him. They married and had more. By now the number of original descendants of Lucy can run into thousands—and the Master was one of them! Remotely, perhaps, but still a descendant. These others who are dying off are the same way. Five hundred years have caught up with them."

"We've got to get out!" Cardew panted. "We were alone with the Master. When he isn't seen again, the people will think—*Come on!*"

THEY got out of the building safely enough, since it was presumed the Master had released them from audience, but by the time they had gotten back to their underground workings they were being harried with cries from the public loudspeakers proclaiming the mysterious disappearance of the Master. This was the chief news—but equally important was the record of ever-mounting senility sweeping the city.

With their short-wave radio down in the underground, Cardew, Clem, and the girl heard every word—and the assembled engineers, too. That they were loyal, knowing the true circumstances, was without doubt; but for the rest of the populace Clem Bradley had no illusions.

Then somebody released the news that invasion from Venus was imminent. This, added to the senility scare, was the last straw. Invasion, and the Master dead!

"They'll get us for this!" Clem said grimly, two hours later. "No use kidding ourselves. We're right in a trap. The death—or rather disappearance—of the Master will convince everybody Lucy is a spy, particularly as invasion is coming. Only thing to do is fight it out. You boys winning?"

They nodded grimy faces, then started to assemble themselves for the onrush they knew was inevitable. It came in another half hour—not only guards, but armed civilians came tumbling down into the underground workings, shouting for vengeance.

"One move more," Cardew roared, standing with flame gun in each hand, "and I'll let you have it! We're not spies—nor is this girl! It's entropy—"

"To hell with the science!" jeered a voice. "Go for 'em! What are we waiting for?"

"We can never hold 'em!" Clem whispered—then all of a sudden a vast paralysis dropped on the crowd. Clem felt it, too.

But he knew the cause—a quite material one. A paralysing wave for mob-quelling was at work. His eyes rose expectantly to the underground entrance as through it, to his surprise, came a heavily-clothed man in space kit. It was Leslie Hurst, Earth's Venusian ambassador.

"What's going on in here?" he demanded, striding forward and signaling the officers with him to keep the crowd under control. "Having a war because we've just missed a real one?"

His eyes became grim. "Yeah, I know the facts," he said. "I got most of them over my space radio—all about a girl creating sabotage. Venusian work. It struck

me as odd because I've a personal check on all Venusian spies, and she didn't fit in. I went straight to the Master the moment I got back to give him special information. I found the place unguarded, but no damned fool had had the sense to switch on the recorder button to see what had happened at the Master's last interview.

"I learned the truth," he went on, looking at Clem and Cardew. "Entropy! Entropy!" he yelled, staring at the crowd. "Five hundred years caught up with your relations; on wood, on steel— You will have the full story when you go home sensibly."

He signaled, and the paralysis lifted.

A voice shouted, "What did you come back for anyway? To invent this tale?"

"No. I came back from Venus in a hurry when a thousand of the best Venusian war chiefs died of old age and vanished! Invasion was thereby smashed to hell! Same thing again—entropy. Venusians are

only Earth colonists, remember. Some of them were successors in multiple to this girl. Don't you understand? She's a heroine! She's saved us, not harmed us!"

Gradually the incredible truth began to sink in, and the mood changed. The ambassador stood grinning as the girl hurried for safety, this time to escape the eager praise. With Clem and Cardew she worked her way over to the ambassador.

"You don't know how close you came to missing us," Clem breathed. "I never thought of colonists, either."

"But it's true," Hurst said seriously. "And that set-up of the interview will clear you. I'll see to that."

"Just what," Lucy asked in bewilderment, "is this all about? How can I have successors when I'm not dead? I don't understand."

"You will," Clem promised her, smiling. "Even if it takes the rest of our lives to explain."

THE END

AMAZING OFFER

2 vitally important books for only **2/-**

★ **'SUCCESS' HOME DOCTOR**

A concise guide to First Aid, Home Nursing, Care of the Sick, etc.

★ **'SUCCESS' HOUSEHOLD ENCYCLOPÆDIA**

A Comprehensive Book of useful Household Hints

Absolutely unsurpassed value! BOTH these wonderful 'SUCCESS' Books for only 2/- Indispensable in the Home.

This is YOUR opportunity to get a 'Home Doctor'—just as complete and elaborate as a big, expensive edition—at a ridiculously low price. Send for this helpful medical guide to-day—and you also receive for your money a copy of the 'Success' Household Encyclopædia, packed with every household hint imaginable.

Every home NEEDS these handy reference books

Write for these two invaluable books NOW! Send Cash with order to:—

MAIL ORDER DEPT., (A). WORLD DISTRIBUTORS 14a, LEVER STREET, MANCHESTER 1.

HOW MUCH OF YOUR WAGE PACKET



ends in Smoke?

CONQUER THE CRAVING EASILY
QUICKLY WITH THE "APAL"
AID OF **APAL**

One of the first effects of conquering the smoking habit is that you realise you have more money in your pocket to spend on more vital things. Next, you notice a marked improvement in your health. The remedy for the tobacco habit is in your hands. With the aid of "APAL"—the imitation cigarette which you never light—you can stop smoking immediately, because inside the "APAL" is a crystallised compound. When you draw on it you get a pleasant, cool taste on your palate that satisfies the desire and eliminates the craving for a smoke.

READ WHAT USERS OF "APAL" SAY

Dear Sirs,

This is to let you know that I have stopped smoking. I had an APAL unit adjusted to my pipe, and since then I have not smoked tobacco at all, and have had no desire for it.

W.C., Gateshead, 11.

Dear Sirs,

I am very pleased to say that after buying an APAL I have no desire to smoke. I smoked 350 cigarettes a week. I never have any craving now, and have saved quite a lot of money.

A.W., Newcastle-an-Tyne.

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the APAL I received a fortnight ago. I have been so satisfied with the result that I am sending for another, for a friend. I feel much better in health, and expense.

D.L., Sheffield, 7.

Dear Sirs,

I am sending for an APAL. My friend says it is "dead cert" to stop anyone from smoking. He got his a long time ago and does not smoke any more.

C.S., Gloucester.

Dear Sirs,

One of my friends, who was a very heavy smoker, has with the aid of APAL stopped altogether. It seems too good to be true. Please send one to my address.

D.H., Lowestoft.

Dear Sirs,

I have seen the amazing result APAL has done for a workmate of mine. Please send one by return post to my address.

S.Mc.C., Scunthorpe.

Dear Sirs,

My doctor has ordered me to stop smoking, and as a friend of mine has had an APAL and stopped smoking, I am anxious to get mine by return.

M.Y., Hull.

Dear Sirs,

I purchased an APAL nine weeks ago. Previous to doing so I smoked 200 cigarettes a week. Since the first week I have not had a cigarette. I am eating and sleeping better, and have lost my early morning cough.

N.L.S., Birmingham, 9.

Send a stamped and addressed envelope for full particulars, free advice, and proof:

HEALTH CULTURE ASSOCIATION

(Dept. 133), 245, HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1

The Missing Day

A NOVELETTE by HENRY HASSE



Chained by the shackles of the infinite it stood, a city of the living dead . . . until a man from Mars dared pierce the fatal veil that could make an astounding end to the day when the world stood still!

CHAPTER I

SYMPHONY OF THE IMMOBILE

THE world does not know of the missing day. And perhaps that is best, after all, for there would be many uneasy minds, despite the virtual fact that such a thing will not occur again. Only three persons know—four, if you count Rac. And, but for the fortunate circumstance of Rac's presence, it might have easily been a year, or a hundred years, or all eternity . . . instead of that grotesque day.

Rac has returned home now, having become homesick despite his very enjoyable visit. It was inevitable that the good-natured and inquisitive little fellow should become a favorite with Earth's populace.

How very much more would he have been honored and feted and idolized had they known the fate from which he delivered them!

But behold!

The night of July 31, 1981. Mike Bessini, big-shot racketeer and gambler, sat in the private office of his Aero Club, one hundred stories above New York's streets.

Mike was counting some of the night's receipts.

Standing with his back to the door, only casually interested, was Mike's bodyguard. Such things were hardly a necessity any more, but Mike Bessini was romantic. He had read that bodyguards were an institution forty years ago, so he liked to have Joe around. From the casino beyond the private door came faint strains of the latest dance tune.

Presently Mike asked, without looking up, "Full house out there tonight, Joe?"

"Not quite, boss, but it's early yet." Joe glanced at the watch on his wrist. "Only one minute to twelve now."

Joe lit a cigarette, glanced idly around the room.

Suddenly he grew tense, shivered a little. "Say, boss, am I imagining things? It seems to be getting cold in here! That's funny!"

Bessini had thrust the receipts into a drawer and was making notations in his ever-present black book.

"Boss, I've got a funny feeling! There's something—something wrong tonight."

Joe's tone made Bessini look up, and he too sensed something wrong, something

about the night itself. With a bound he was at the open window, looking out at the city below.

A strange peace had come over the city. A stillness that was eerie. Not a sound—nothing.

Nothing, that is, but a thin, transparent blanket of palest yellow that rose up from the world below. Simply a color spreading upward and outward almost with the speed of light. And all was cold, a strange and sudden cold for July 31st.

"Gas! It's a raid!" Mike shouted inanely as he staggered back from the window. "They can't do this; I've been paying off regular! They can't get away with—"

But this was no gas, and those were Mike Bessini's last words. The rush of atmospheric color had reached the hundredth floor and spread on out toward the blackness of space. In the merest fraction of a second Mike Bessini became as one frozen. He stood poised grotesquely in mid-step, one arm raised in futile gesture. His eyes were open but unseeing; his mouth was open too, the last of his frantic words unspoken.

Joe, halfway across the room, remained a statue of suddenly arrested motion. His look of bewilderment was now frozen permanently on his face. Even the smoke from his cigarette had become a part of the weird effect. It now remained motionless, in beautifully spiralled patterns of blue against the pale atmospheric yellow. . . .

Out in the casino the phenomenon had struck as suddenly. The dance tune had stopped in mid-note. The orchestra leader stood motionless with baton half raised in now nerveless fingers. Out on the floor, in their main number, the internationally famous dance team of Olandra and Leon had been halted in the process of a particularly intricate step. They now remained frozen in the circle of the spotlight, perfection in postural grace.

But none were there who could appreciate this perfect symphony of the immobile. The patrons at the tables were all a part of it. Some had glasses half raised. Others were quietly intent on the dance number. But all occupants of the large room were rigid and unmoving now, all

eyes were fixed and unseeing. The white spotlight stabbed eerily through the pale, clear yellow which had invaded the atmosphere so instantaneously.

MOTORS purred softly as the huge passenger liner slipped swiftly through the sky enroute from New York to San Francisco. In the pilot's seat Carl Bowman peered ahead at the tiny cluster of lights that was the city of Cincinnati. Never, he thought, had he seen so clear and so dark a night. But suddenly the dark sky far off to his left seemed to shiver, to grow pale, to move! Startled, he looked around him. The entire sky behind had become a vast shimmering blanket of palest yellow, seeming to reach from the earth up to the stars. Even as he looked, the color seemed to leap swiftly toward him, swallowing up the sky! Instinctively Bowman reached out to make sure the gravity control was on.

But the swift color from behind reached and swallowed up the air-liner when the pilot's hand was still two inches from the control—and there his hand remained. The purring of motors ceased. The liner stopped in its forward motion as though a huge invisible hand had grasped it from behind. Then it plummeted earthward, carrying fifty-two persons to their death.

Through some mechanic's oversight the gravity control had not been on.

MISS DELLA JONES noticed nothing unusual about the stranger who entered Ye Nifty Tasty Shoppe. He was tall and well dressed and rather good looking. He ordered coffee, which she served him. He lingered over it, and she wished he would hurry, for it was nearly midnight and she wanted to lock up. He finished finally, came slowly over to the cash register, and said calmly, "Don't scream; this is a hold-up."

She looked up into the muzzle of a very large revolver. She felt her legs suddenly become weak, like wet macaroni. Foolishly she opened her mouth to scream, but the scream never issued—for at that moment it was midnight.

The girl's eyes remained wide and frightened; her mouth remained open; and

the revolver in the hand of the stranger remained leveled as they faced each other fantastically across the counter, there in the suddenly motionless silence. . . .

IN the control room of the spaceship *Terra*, Vee Deering glanced up from the charts she had been studying. She suddenly laughed at what she saw.

"Heavens, Bob, look at Rac now! Did you ever see him more excited? Not even the time when you gave him the flashlight for his very own!"

Rac, the birdlike little Martian, was indeed excited as he stood at the prow of the *Terra* and gaped at the spinning blue globe ahead that was Earth. On his head and breast the soft down fairly glowed with its lichen-green lustre. His flat, stubby bill was pressed against the glass, and his peculiarly apelike face was almost radiant. The cowl-like frill arching over wide, staring eyes gave him a perpetual quizzical expression. It was the rapid ruffling of that frill, denoting excitement, that attracted Vee at this moment.

Rac simply could not stand still. He balanced himself on one spindly leg and then the other. He turned to Vee, but she pretended she was busy. He toyed a minute with the flashlight, his proudest possession. Finally he extended his stubby wings and half ran, half soared along the forty feet of space in the *Terra*. He went back to his corner and pored over the simple English sentences Bob Stevens had outlined for him. But the transparent prow drew him irresistibly and he was soon back again, staring fascinatedly at the blue globe of Earth.

Rac caught Vee's eyes at last, and his own beady black eyes glittered. "Rac—" he began in his excited staccato manner, "Rac arrive soon now?"

Vee sighed. "Not soon, Rac. Earth is still far away. One sleep period yet. One more sleep."

Bob Stevens, his lean face dark from four years of Martian wind and sand, looked up from the transmitter over which he'd been working incessantly for the past few hours.

Grim lines still showed around his

mouth, but he managed a wry smile as he said, "Vee, that must be the hundredth time you've explained space distance to that brat."

"And how many times," Vee stormed, "must I tell you to stop calling him 'that brat'? I simply adore him—and so do you! Besides," she continued, "why shouldn't Rac be impatient? We've told him so much about Earth, and he wants so much to learn more. His inquisitiveness is fairly oozing out of him!"

Bob winced. "It always will!" He was remembering the almost incessant line of eager questions Rac had peppered him with in his limited English. And Rac was learning English fast.

They had found Rac and a few hundred others, the last handful of a dying race, burrowed beneath ruins of an ancient city near the Martian polar cap, almost in semi-barbarism, but with queer memory remnants of a long lost science.

"Yes," Bob said reflectively, "I thought man was an inquisitive cuss—until I met Rac and his friends! Man is merely inquisitive, but the amazing thing about Rac is his remarkable retentive memory. He does not understand—he inquires—and he remembers! In a few years we'll be sending colonies to Mars, and meanwhile Rac is the ideal emissary. He's learning fast and he's insatiable. When he returns he can teach his people. I'll venture to say that some day he'll be king, or whatever they choose to call it, of a new race."

"What! Not Rac, that brat!" Vee rocked with glee. "Do you hear, Rac? Some day you are to be king!"

But Rac, if he heard, did not care. He remained poring over the hand-printed sheets Bob had given him. He read a few of the sentences in his queer staccato voice. But he made occasional trips back to the prow to stare at the blue globe growing ever nearer.

FOR hours more Bob worked over the transmitter, but it remained dead. His brow was knit into a puzzled frown.

"Vee, I simply can't make it out! I should be able to contact Earth. We're surely within the zone by now!"

"Maybe. But remember, we've been gone four years! Our return could hardly be suspected. We've probably been given up for dead long ago, just another futile space attempt added to the long list."

A small transparent square on the instrument panel lighted up with a green glow, flickered uncertainly. Bob turned to it feverishly, manipulating the dials.

"This may be it! I think I've gotten through!" The light dimmed; they heard a few ominous clicks—and then a thin voice came through:

"—York! W24X trying to contact the *Terra*! Answer, *Terra*, if you're on our beam. W24X New York! W24X trying to contact—"

In a fever of excitement Bob switched over.

"Hello, New York! This is the *Terra*. We've picked up your beam! We're now about ten hours out, and—"

"Rac-c-c? Rac-c—" Upon hearing the strange voice come through, the insatiably curious little Martian was instantly at Bob's elbow, quizzical, aware of something unusual.

"Rac, go away! Can't you see I'm busy?" Bob exclaimed roughly.

But Rac was not to be denied so easily. He wanted to know.

"Vee, try to explain to him!" Bob cried in desperation. "I've got to keep on the beam!"

It was difficult, but Vee courageously tried to explain how the voice they heard was transmitted to them from the blue globe ahead. Rac never more than half understood, but he listened and bobbed his head and was satisfied for the moment.

Bob looked up triumphantly. "So, Vee, our return hasn't been expected? Well, I've just learned that we were first sighted by an amateur astronomer in Australia fourteen hours ago; since then scores of telescopes have been trained on us!"

"Oh, dear," Vee couldn't resist saying, "and I forgot to pull down the shades last night!"

"Sh!" Bob said as the voice of the Earth announcer came through again.

"—and although every effort has been made to keep your coming a secret until

you had effected a landing, the news has leaked out that the returning *Terra* has been sighted. It's nearly midnight now, but crowds are still converging on the spaceport by road, by plane, and afoot. You are not to be alarmed. All is under control here and your landing shall not be hampered. Remain on the present beam. Field lights shall remain on, all is in readiness. . . ."

Bob, with sudden inspiration, said to Vee, "I think I'll let Rac say a few words when W24X switches over. That should be a surprise to them!"

The over-zealous voice from Earth was still coming. "Speculation here is rife, for yours is the first successful space flight! There have been several other disastrous attempts since you left four years ago. The Haley rocket, two years ago, is thought to have reached the moon and crashed—"

"Still trying for the moon," Bob breathed. "I warned them it was folly to try for the moon, but they wouldn't believe me!"

"—other attempt, the Spurlin expedition, is believed to have made an erratic—"

Bob tired of the voice. He clicked it off abruptly and sent his own through. "What about Dr. Broxted? Does he know we're returning? He'll be glad to know the fuel he prepared for us is highly successful!"

The answer came: "Oh, yes; but I'm not sure whether he's received the news yet. However, Broxted isn't experimenting with rocket fuels any longer. Instead, it's rumored that he's—"

It was then that the Earth voice abruptly ceased, without the slightest warning. With a muttered "Damn!" Bob tried to pick it up again. It was to no avail. He glanced quickly at the panel. It still glowed green, unwavering, and that meant he was still on the beam. But—

Suddenly Rac set up a clatter such as they had never heard before. He rushed to Vee and pulled her, crying, "Come! Come quick, see!" The cowl over his eyes was in rapid ruffling movement. Bob, certain that something was wrong, rushed over to see.

Rac was pointing excitedly at the spinning globe of Earth ahead. Even as Bob

looked he knew, and yet did not know, why the announcer's voice had been suddenly cut off.

Over the surface of the globe a strange and swift transformation was taking place. Before their very eyes they saw the bright blue color of Earth change to a pale yellow. They judged it must have started at a point not far from New York City, and it spread out in a perfect, unbroken, rapidly growing circle. They saw it expand over the Atlantic, over Canada, over the Great Lakes and Florida and beyond. It was only a matter of seconds, not minutes, until the usurping color had covered all the hemisphere visible to them; and it was not difficult to suppose that it continued, embracing the entire globe.

Bob and Vee stood there a full minute, watching, dazed and awe-struck. But that was all; nothing else happened. It was now a yellow-tinged Earth that spun out there before them. They looked at each other, not daring to voice the foreboding in both their minds.

Rac was asking questions, but for once his curiosity had to remain unsatisfied.

CHAPTER II

CITY OF SILENCE

A MILE above New York City the *Terra* streaked on stubby wings. Even at that height the magnificent panorama brought a nostalgic longing. There were no aircraft at their level, but far below numerous planes hovered. In spite of the brief glimpse, however, something seemed wrong. Those planes weren't moving. Everything was strangely quiet.

It seemed that their tiny shell was the only moving and only sounding thing in all the world.

They braked gradually, and inside of thirty miles set the *Terra* down in a lonely rural spot. Rac was fairly dancing with glee, but Bob and Vee didn't notice his antics now. They peered curiously out into the yellowness.

"We'd better decide what to do," Bob said practically. "First we'll test that

atmosphere. Frankly, I don't trust it any more."

The test proved the air fresh and pure, and Bob was surprised, almost disappointed.

"Had you expected some kind of—gas?" Vee asked.

"Yes, something like that."

"Me, too. But now what?"

"Now we get out. This is the end of the line."

It was good to feel the earth under them once more. But they were even further mystified, for there was an uncomfortable chill to the air despite a morning sun that shone wanly now through the yellowness. And this was July!

Grimly silent, they made for one of the arterial highways they could see in the distance. Rac, with his funny skipping pace, stayed very close to them; he wasn't gleeful now; he was over-awed at this strange new world that for the moment he could not evince his usual curiosity at anything. Even to Bob and Vee it almost seemed that they had somehow missed Earth and landed on some alien world.

Vee stopped suddenly, holding up a finger.

"What's the matter?" Bob asked.

"Listen!"

Bob listened. "I don't hear a thing."

"That's just the point!" Vee exclaimed.

"It just now struck me why everything's so eerie. It's the silence! No sound of a plane overhead, or a motor car, or a bird singing out here as there should be. Not even any of the tiny little sounds we're so accustomed to hearing almost subconsciously. And look at those trees over there, how still! There's not even the slightest breeze. It makes you almost want to whisper! Bob, it's frightening!"

Bob had been pondering, looking about him. Now he repeated her words almost to himself. "Yes, it is frightening. And I'm afraid that—" He did not finish.

"Bob, what is it? If you have any idea what this is all about—"

"No, no, of course I haven't," he answered too hurriedly. "I'm just beginning to form a theory. It may not be right. We'll have to wait and see."

THEY walked half a mile before they came upon the sedan, standing curiously in the exact middle of the highway, headed toward the city. The driver was the only occupant. He sat stiffly erect, staring straight ahead, both hands on the wheel. The motor wasn't running.

"Hey," Bob called as they walked around the side of the car. There was no answer. Bob reached in and shook the fellow, who immediately toppled over sideways on the seat. But his arms remained stiffly erect, parallel, in the position of driving.

Vee gasped and whispered, "Is—is he dead?"

Rac only stared in wide-eyed wonder.

"No, not dead. It seems some sort of cataleptic state—but not exactly that either. It's peculiar! Well, I'll move this fellow to the back seat and we'll ride to town—if this car will still operate."

Bob soon had the motor purring, and they proceeded toward the metropolis. Rac's awe was beginning to fade a little. He was so delighted at this new mode of locomotion that he could not remain still. Soon they came upon another motionless car in the middle of the highway. They stopped to investigate. It had four occupants and all were in the same curious, wide-eyed, immobile state.

As they came closer to the outskirts of the city this motionless "traffic" became so frequent that Bob had to drive slowly and with considerable caution, threading his way through it. Once he gave an experimental blast of the horn. The sound went shivering away into the vast silence, to die away finally, fainter and fainter. The effect was so mournful he did not try that again! Off to the right they could see a sport-model plane hovering on its gravity control at about a thousand foot level. Soon they began seeing more and more planes, strangely motionless. At one place close to the highway they saw the tangled remains of one.

For some time Vee had been wanting to say something, but hardly daring to speak. "Bob," she said at last, "I'm scared, and

I don't care who knows it! I'd rather face those dust plains of Mars again than this. There's just something so—"

"I know exactly how you feel," he replied grimly, "and I'm afraid I'm thinking the same thing you are. Are we the only ones to have escaped this?" He shrugged, hoping Vee wouldn't see the hopeless look in his eyes. "But we've got to face the facts, Vee—and prepare for the worst."

Despite all morbid speculation it was not until they entered the city that the full significance of an appalling situation burst upon them. As they drove through the streets they became ever more cognizant of the abysmal stillness. Their ears hearked for the accustomed noise, but all seemed one vast void of soundlessness that overwhelmed them in new awe.

Where was the thunder of the city? Where was the sound of traffic, of planes overhead, the cries of the inevitable newsboys, all the usual noon-day noise and bustle of a busy metropolis? At first the streets were almost deserted; but soon they began to see, here and there, the grotesquely poised figures of belated pedestrians of the night before.

Once Bob stopped the car at a red traffic light that shone like a baleful eye through the ghastly yellow. But after a minute the light did not change, and Bob grinned foolishly as he drove through.

"There, I've just realized a life-long ambition," he said with an attempt at jocularly he did not feel. "I always wanted to drive through one of those red lights without worrying about a cop lurking around."

Ever more frequently now did they find the stark, motionless figures, revealing so graphically the frozen fate of this world. There a man was bowed low, just entering a taxi. There in a doorway a young man was just kissing his girl friend good night; there had never been a longer kiss! The fact that everyone seemed in the very act of making some movement or gesture, but did not, was most unnerving.

There a man was just stepping off the curb directly into the path of a car that

was very close to him; the driver was tense, as though he were applying the brakes, and on his face was frozen a look of horror at the impending accident.

This tableau interested Bob exceedingly. "Wait a minute," he said, as he stopped the car. He walked over to the pedestrian and hesitated. Then, as Vee watched in amazement, he carried the man to the middle of the street and left him standing poised in mid-step, but beyond the danger of the approaching car.

"What was that for?" Vee asked

"Just a hunch," Bob explained a bit foolishly. "But I may have saved that fellow's life."

Nearing Times Square the motionless traffic was so heavy they had difficulty driving through it. "We may as well get out here," Bob said at last. "We don't know where we're going anyway. Still scared?"

"N-no," said Vee, "I think I'm beyond that. I'm just a little awe-struck still. Rac, too, judging by his silence. I just know what he's thinking: that this is nothing like the world we described to him!"

IN grim retrospection Bob and Vee stared around. How many times had they traversed these streets rife with turmoil! What a contrast now! They walked along slowly, instinctively avoiding contact with the people, trying not to let the gruesomeness of it get on their nerves.

A beggar stood furtively in a doorway, and a lady was in the act of dropping a coin in his outstretched hand. A taxi driver had his head out of his cab window, bawling out a motorist. At the next corner a policeman seemed to be reprimanding a troublesome drunk, who stood there motionless now, leering at him.

"What a paradise for a pick-pocket!" Vee said, staring around.

Rac suddenly broke his long silence to say, "*Terra* returning earthward."

They stopped. "What did you say, Rac?"

"*Terra* returning earthward," Rac repeated.

"What the devil can he mean?" Bob asked, puzzled. "Oh, now I see!"

They were near a newsstand where a boy stood with an open paper thrust out toward the pedestrians. His expression was ludicrous, his mouth open wide in the act of bawling his wares. At any moment they expected the stentorian sound to emerge, but it didn't.

The paper was a "Special Midnight Extra" and the headline read: *Terra Returning Earthward!* Another paper proclaimed: *Terra, Missing Four Years, Sighted!* Rac read all the headlines aloud, laboriously but correctly, very proud of his ability.

Streets around the Times Building seemed especially crowded, everyone looking up to where the news sign eternally moved. But it was no longer moving nor discernible in the yellowish atmosphere.

"I guess our return was being proclaimed up there," Bob said, "at the very instant this thing—happened."

"Bob," Vee said, suddenly deadly serious, "we've simply got to face this business squarely and—"

"How do you face a nightmare like this at all, much less squarely? Anything in mind?"

"Well, we've got to grasp at straws. I was thinking—maybe there are people somewhere who escaped this—people who were indoors?"

Bob shook his head. "I think not. Else why aren't some of them on the streets now?"

"Maybe afraid if they emerge they—they'll fall victim to this."

"Then why aren't you and I and Rac affected? No, I'm afraid that argument won't hold water, Vee. To get at this systematically, we can only be sure of one thing: the source of this must be local. We can discount that the Earth passed through the tail of a comet or some other gaseous matter, because we had a grandstand seat in the *Terra* and we know that no such thing occurred. Besides, we saw it start at a point right about here, and then quickly spread. That brings us right up against a blank wall. All I can think of is to explore this old planet from stem to stern."

"Bob! Do you suppose they had a war? Thinkers were comparatively peaceful when we left, but a lot can happen in four years."

"Hmm. It's a possibility, at that. If so, all I can say is whoever thought of *this* sure had the ace card up his sleeve!"

"We must explore first, of course," Vee said dully. "There must be somebody . . . Bob, if there isn't, I simply couldn't bear to stay here." She suddenly brightened. "We can always go back to Mars and Rac's people. I was just getting to like it there."

"Liar," Bob replied. "Besides, that's just what we can't do. You forget we're low on fuel now, and only Dr. Broxted knew the formula."

"He may have left it around."

"Not Dr. Broxted. Besides, we've been away so long trying for Mars instead of the moon, he probably thought the fuel was a failure."

AS they walked along they noticed all the clocks had stopped at midnight; the hands were like single forefingers pointing mutely upward, as if calling the fatal minute to their attention.

"And we were wondering how we were going to escape the welcoming crowds!" Bob said. "I even had Rac rehearsing a little speech of greeting to the people of Earth. Ironical, isn't it?" He stopped suddenly, realizing they were in front of a pretentious cafe. He gazed ever so wistfully in.

"Do you know, Vee, I'd made up my mind that one of the first things I wanted when I got home was a decent meal!"

Vee brightened. "You get the most marvelous ideas! It's what I need to cheer me up."

"Besides," Bob added, "I can think better with a warm meal in me."

Rac stayed close to them as they entered. He still gazed around at this strange world where everything and everyone was so still. But now Rac was pondering. He knew that this motionless silence wasn't the usual "sleep period" on this alien world, such as his two friends had to undergo regularly. No, this wasn't like that, nor was this anything like the world they had

described to him in such glowing terms. This was different—and wrong! Rac had observed how perturbed his two friends were. He had a very sincere feeling for them, and appreciation of all the things they had shown and taught him.

From the very depths of his heart he wished he could help them now.

They had started to seat themselves at the nearest table when they both thought of something at the very same moment.

"We'll have to help ourselves; we can't order!"

They both laughed, the first heart-felt laugh since they had landed, and it seemed to break the tension that gripped them. The scene in the room—patrons at the tables, waiters hovering about, a floor show in progress—now seemed like some bizarre marionette show halted in the middle of an act. They proceeded toward the kitchen, but Vee suddenly stopped. A waiter had just been in the act of emerging from there, bearing a tray of steaming food.

Vee stared and exclaimed, "Bob! This stuff should be cold!"

"What? Of course it should be, by now."

"But it isn't! Look—it's still steaming hot!"

It was true. But before they could marvel long over this miracle, Bob had discovered another. The door behind the waiter, being on swinging hinges, should have swung shut, but it had not! It remained ajar, precisely in keeping with the rest of the motionless phenomena.

And now Rac, who had been wandering around the tables, set up his "Rac-c-c" sound denoting that he too had discovered something of more than passing interest.

Rac was staring, fascinated, at a beautifully spiralled, but very quiescent pattern of blue smoke curled up from a cigarette in the fingers of a gentleman at one of the tables. They watched the still glowing end of that cigarette with a sort of fascinated horror. But it crept no nearer to the fingers that held it! Rac was delighted that he had shown them something of probable importance.

"Do you know," Bob said with a sigh, "this sort of thing would soon drive me

batty if it weren't rather funny. But I'm beginning to form a theory which, if true, makes it not so funny any more." He fanned the air violently, and the tobacco smoke drifted and thinned.

"What is your theory?" Vee asked.

"It's—well, just fantastic enough to fit all this," Bob replied enigmatically. "But I don't want to spill it until I'm sure. Let's have that steak or whatever it is you want."

"It seems price is no object," Vee said, "so the best is none too good." She stared around at the tables. "See that roast duck over there? That for me!" She pointed to a table where a pompous gentleman had been about to begin the appetizing repast.

They soon were demolishing the duck dinner. Rac would touch nothing but three or four kinds of fruit that Vee brought him from the kitchen. The main provender of Rac's people had been a sort of sickly grayish fruit which they prepared in various ways; but evidently Rac thought the Earth fruit much tastier. He viewed the duck, however, rather dubiously. He may have recognized it as a sort of far distant Earthian cousin of his!

THEY were in much better spirits, and Rac was almost jubilant as they went out into the streets again to observe a city halted in its stride.

Rac at last felt equal to testing his stubby wings. He would take ten or twelve long-legged running steps, then soar fifty feet into the air. Because of the denser atmosphere this was more height than he had ever been able to attain on Mars. But the stronger gravity would not allow his wings to sustain him for more than a few seconds, and he'd come gliding back down at them.

He would skip along beside them for awhile, quaintly pronouncing words on shop windows, on the theatre billings—proud of his ability, even if he didn't know what half the words meant. Then, suddenly tiring of his oral prowess, Rac would run swiftly ahead and soar upward again.

Once they stopped at a drinking fountain, and after persistent attempts water

gushed forth, to Rac's amazement. It all seemed very wasteful to him, almost sacrilegious. Water was a scarce commodity in the barren caverns of Mars, something to be hoarded and treasured.

Once, stopping before a little coffee shop, they saw a startling tableau at the counter. A man stood there. In his hand was a gun, pointed straight at the girl behind the counter. The girl's mouth was open, as if she had screamed or was just about to. Vee tried the door and it was unlocked. She entered. She gingerly took the gun from the man's hand, then placed it firmly in the girl's fingers so that it pointed straight at him!

"What was that for?" Bob asked in amazement.

Vee smiled sweetly. "Maybe for the same reason you moved that pedestrian back there. Who knows?"

Bob shook his head sadly. "I'm going to watch the papers for this tomorrow—if there ever is a tomorrow!"

At last they gazed out upon the most breathtaking spectacle they had yet seen, but one that was very appropriate to this new motionless world. As far as the eye could see, the ocean lay before them like a huge, flat mirror of greenish glass, unbelievably vast and placid! To the very horizon it stretched in absolute quiescence, not the tiniest ripple disturbing the surface. Words were unnecessary as they stood in awe before this expansive miracle which no person had ever seen before. The very placidity of the vast water seemed to grip them so they hardly dared move.

But not so with Rac. To him that great green expanse was simply another natural part of this alien world. He had taken another of his short soaring flights and was hovering fifty feet above the water. Now he began to glide swiftly down, straight for the smooth green surface. They shouted at him, but it was too late. A yard from the surface he balanced himself on his stubby wings and alighted with a little splash.

Rac sank from sight and came up sputtering, a very surprised Martian indeed. With instinctive strokes of his wings he made his way to where Bob, laughing,

could help him out. Rac was more frightened than hurt, more astonished than frightened. Never had he dreamed that smooth expanse could be water. It was more water than he had ever dreamed existed! He simply stood there dripping and looked to the horizon, enraptured.

That ocean spelled doom to their waning hope; it was the final proof they needed that the condition encompassed the globe. Now it was nearing dusk, and they began to realize that for the first time in history the metropolis was going to pass a night shrouded in utter darkness.

"Let's return to the *Terra*," Vee said a little anxiously. "I don't think I could stand it here tonight. It's like some city of living dead!"

They found the same car they'd driven into the city and headed back out to the *Terra*. Bob left the car in the middle of the highway again, and carefully placed the driver in the front seat the way he had found him. They were silent, thoughtful, as they walked the rest of the way. Even Rac now was more quiet and a little scared. The moon peered palely through the lucent yellowness of the night like a poor frightened ghost of the moon they had formerly known.

CHAPTER III

"BID TIME RETURN"

"**M**AYBE we'd better try the radio again," Vee said as they entered the spaceship.

"Smart girl. We should have done that long ago."

For several hours they sent out messages, calls of frantic query on all wave lengths. But it was futile. The receptor remained dead. Bob gave up in despair.

"Well," he said at last, "it looks as if the world is ours—but I don't know what we're going to do with all the people! Talk of your Alexanders and Caesars—those boys were pikers compared to us; our private estate extends for 25,000 miles and meets itself."

He went into the rear compartment of the ship and rolled out their small plane, which they'd used for scouting on Mars. "There's only one more thing to do," he said. "I'm going to play my hunch."

Soon they were flying back over the darkened city, Bob at the controls. He flew high above all traffic levels to avoid collision with numerous planes that still hovered. But all below was a sameness, dark and silent.

"What are you looking for?" Vee called.

Bob shook his head. "I don't know. A light. Anything!"

They found it minutes later. They had criss-crossed the city. Rac's sharp eyes spotted something first, far to the right. He pointed excitedly. Far below them they saw a tiny bright parabola flash across the sky. It was followed by two more. Signal rocket flares! It meant that someone, after all, was down there!

Quickly Bob headed the plane for the spot. He zoomed and raced the motors as a signal, and the tiny flaming arcs continued. They seemed far away, out over Long Island somewhere.

As they came nearer, Bob called, "I know who it is now! Dr. Broxted! We should have known it!"

Vee nodded. Far below a little square of light loomed against the darkness. A minute later their plane was slanting down toward it. They recognized the huge white house and wide lawn, now ablaze with lights, the only light in all the surrounding darkness. They set the plane down, and a small, tense figure of a man came running toward them.

As they stepped out he stopped abruptly, stared, then rushed forward and grasped their hands. "Bob Stevens! And Vee! Good heavens, I thought—Where've you been all this time?"

"Merely to Mars, Doctor," Bob replied. "Your fuel was quite a success! But didn't you hear on the radio that we'd been sighted?"

Broxted shook his head. "No—I've been too busy. I did hear your motors tonight and sent up my signals. But I didn't dream it was you. I haven't been into the city yet, I—I didn't want—"

"I don't blame you," Bob said. "It's not pleasant. But here, let me introduce you to a very good friend of ours." He drew Rac forth into the light. "Doctor Broxted, meet Rac."

But Rac was very silent again, as he always was when things happened too fast for him.

Broxted stared at the birdlike creature in amazement. "Wh-what's that?" he stammered.

"You mean who, Doctor, not what. Rac's a Martian. We've been on Mars nearly four years, and I must admit we expected a better welcome home than this. What's it all about? I can see how Vee and I escaped this thing, being in space, but I don't see how you—"

"I don't myself, Bob. It was only pure luck; I can tell you that. But—do you mean you can't guess what's happened?"

"I can do more than guess. It begins to look as if my theory—"

"Bob Stevens!" Vee exclaimed furiously. "You've been ranting about a theory as if—as if it were exclusive property or something. Well, I've got one of my own, and I'll bet it's as good as yours!"

"Okay," Bob grinned. "Spill!"

"All right, smarty, I will." She turned to Broxted. "Doctor, you've been working on that time-experiment thing again. I thought you had given it up."

"That's right, Vee. But I had a new principle this time," Broxted began eagerly, "a different line of—"

"See!" she exclaimed to Bob.

"Yes, Vee, you're positively brilliant."

"Come on, I'll show you." Broxted eagerly led the way to the house. "But I must admit, I seem to have bungled things. Rather badly, I'm afraid."

"That," Bob said, "is only putting it mildly."

Broxted waved a defiant finger. "But my principle was correct, is still correct! Something just happened; I can't quite figure it out yet myself. You shall see for yourselves."

"And your time theory—it's the same as before?"

"Yes, just as I explained to you four years ago. Except for the device itself.

Oh yes, I finally built it. I proceeded along entirely unprecedented lines, with a series of rotors of my own design connected in such sequence as to set up a definite stress in the time field."

"Well, isn't there any way you can—undo this terrible thing that you've done?"

"I'll let you be the judge of that," Broxted replied with a strange bitterness, opening the laboratory door. "Here we are."

THEY entered. They stared around. The room seemed extraordinarily bare; at least there was nothing which might even remotely have been a time device.

"But what is it?" Bob exclaimed. "I don't see a thing!"

"Don't you?" Broxted said, and that same strange bitterness was in his voice. "Well, it's right there in front of you."

At these words Bob looked up sharply. A terrible thought had occurred to him. Broxted's brain had become unbalanced by the sudden world calamity.

"I know what you're thinking," Broxted went on, "but I assure you I'm not mad. The time device is right there. Just take a few steps forward, but carefully!"

Bob walked slowly forward, hand outstretched. Then he touched something. It was like nothing he had ever felt before. It didn't seem to be a substance at all, but a force, smooth, cold, impenetrable—and invisible! He passed his hand along it for a few feet. It seemed curved.

"Roughly it's about eight feet in diameter," Broxted explained. "And just inside that invisible barrier is my time device."

"You mean—you can't get in there?"

"My dear boy, what do you suppose I've been doing here for the past many hours? I assure you most positively that I can't get in there!"

Vee stepped forward and felt along the barrier of force. "What about dynamite?" she said.

Broxted shook his head patiently. "I tried blasting; the explosion is only hurled outward. I've made every test I can think of, including acids. Nothing seems to affect that barrier. It's pure static force. My only

solution is to build a duplicate time device, but it'll take months. What I hope to do then—and it's only a forlorn chance—is to use the second time device to go forward in time and release the first one."

"Then you mean to say," Bob exclaimed, "that beyond that barrier—"

"Is the future—yes. My time device reached into the future, but, I believe, *only for a fraction of a second!* I'd set my experiment for exactly midnight last night. I stepped into the machine, and precisely on the second of midnight I released the power. There was a lurch, then a vast surge. Fortunately I was hurled backward as the machine slipped under me. I was dazed for several minutes. When I came to, everything was just as you see it now. That time surge had hurtled outward, almost with the speed of light, to envelop the whole world. I discovered that minutes later.

"As for the barrier—well, my only explanation is this: you've heard it said that time is only an infinite number of 'nows,' each impinging delicately, intangibly upon the next. This impenetrable force is the barrier between our 'now' and the next one existing an infinitesimal fraction of a second beyond us! Ironical, isn't it? There sits my time device only a fraction in the future, and we can't reach it!"

Bob was vociferously skeptical. "That," he exclaimed, "sounds screwy! Time is only an abstract conception, not something that—well, that can be tampered with!"

"You're right on one point, at least," Broxted agreed bitterly. "It's certainly not to be tampered with. I've learned that now, maybe too late. But look at it this way: we've been accustomed to regard time as we would some perpetual motion machine; it goes on forever. But throw a wrench into the perpetual motion machine and what happens? It instantly stops. Well, in effect, that's what I've done with my time device; I've instantly and completely jammed the time-flow between the infinitesimal 'nows.' How else can you account for that motionless world out there? It's motionless because it's timeless."

Vee spoke up eagerly, "Oh, I understand that! I read somewhere that time is what

keeps everything from happening at once."

"Vee, don't try to be funny!" Bob exclaimed.

"That's not so facetious as it sounds," Broxted said. "Nothing can happen without time to happen in. And you, Bob, are wrong when you say time is only an abstract conception. My time theory is only a matter of logic, and I'll give you a lucid example. Suppose a book lies on a table. The book has length, breadth, and depth. Would you say, with those dimensions, the book exists?"

"Yes," Bob said positively.

Broxted turned to Vee, smiling in his best class-room manner. "And you, Vee? Would you say it exists?"

"Well, I'll say no, but I think there's some catch in it."

"No catch, merely logic. No, the book would not exist. To exist any object must have not only length, breadth, and depth—but also time in which to exist!"

"Then why are we existing," Bob persisted, "if time has stopped?"

"Time is still here," Broxted explained patiently, "it's merely static. Suppose I reach out and move that book to the other end of the table. I could not have moved, nor could I have caused the book to move, save through a certain section—a few seconds—of the fourth dimension, time. Or, very simply defined, time is merely the duration of movement. So now that my machine has jammed the time-flux, nothing can move except by some outside impetus."

"How right you are," Bob said bitterly. "Everything out there's motionless, from cigarette smoke to the ocean itself!"

"But what about decay and disease?" Vee said practically. "Do you suppose that'll come if things are—are left this way?"

"I doubt if there's any danger of that," Broxted replied. "But you're right; something must be done—and the only way is to reach my time device and release it."

"And you say it'll take months to make another one!"

Vee exclaimed suddenly, "Bob! Where did Rac go?" She was looking anxiously around the laboratory, but Rac was nowhere to be seen. "He was here. He was

standing right here by me just a minute ago! Rac, where are you?" she called.

And then, although they couldn't see him, they heard Rac's voice.

"Here I am," his voice said from somewhere very near. Then Rac suddenly appeared, out of the thin air, and walked over to Vee!

BROXTED stood quite tense for a moment, staring. Then he yelled, "He came out of there!" He rushed over to Rac and exclaimed, "How did you do it? How did you get in there? Tell me!"

Rac cringed a against Vee.

"Wait a minute," Bob said, "you're scaring him!"

"But he got in there—through the barrier!" Broxted was very excited. "Ask him how he did it. Tell him to do it again!"

"Now, Rac," Bob said to the little Martian, "this is very important. Tell us how you got in there. Or, better still, just show us. This will be a big help to us, Rac. You understand that? Just do again what you did a few minutes ago."

Rac bobbed his head, quickly comprehending. "Like this," he said. He turned, walked toward that invisible barrier—and disappeared!

"But why?" exclaimed Broxted, puzzled.

"Why can he do it, and not us?"

"Rac," Bob called, "can you see us?"

"Yes," the little Martian replied, puzzled.

"I can see you."

"Is there a machine in there?"

"Yes, all shiny."

"Don't touch it!" Broxted called quickly. "Come on out, Rac."

Rac emerged, pleased at the excitement he had caused. But he couldn't understand it! All this talk about barriers. All he had done was walk straight to the shiny glass machine he saw standing in the centre of the room.

"I simply can't understand it," Broxted was muttering. "Why, why—"

"Why?" Bob answered. "Because Rac's a very remarkable person, that's why, and he'd do anything for us!" He was pleased at this unexpected prowess of Rac's. But to himself he muttered, "No, damned if I know how he did it!"

"Then—if he can get through there like that, he might release my time device and bring it back!" Broxted pondered a moment, then added hopelessly, "No, it's no use. Too complicated a task."

"Doctor," Bob said, "we'll excuse your saying that this time, because you don't know Rac very well. But let me tell you, nothing's too complicated for Rac. You just draw a diagram showing him what to do."

"I can do better than that. I have a tiny model I made before the real one. But you don't understand. Even if I could get in there myself, I'm not sure I could bring it back. It's more than just pulling a lever or pressing a button. There will have to be certain calculations, adjustments."

"You just bring out your model and show Rac what to do."

Then Bob turned to the little Martian and said, very seriously "Rac, all the other things you've learned weren't very important. What you must learn now is more important than all of them put together—but I know you can do it. In your hands lies the salvation of our entire world, the world we told you about. You understand? You must listen very carefully to what Doctor Broxted tells you."

Rac understood. He bobbed his head solemnly. Using the tiny model, Broxted explained the complicated details no less than a dozen times, slowly, step by step. Rac merely watched, listened, sometimes nodded or asked a terse question. To him it was all very fascinating.

Then Rac showed him that he'd absorbed it all. He went through the whole process by himself, flawlessly. Broxted was amazed, for it had included a rather complicated formula. He looked upon Rac with a new but bewildered respect.

Bob said proudly, "See?"

THEY were moving over to the time barrier with Rac. Vee suddenly called, "Wait a minute! If this works, if Rac releases the machine, what will happen? Will everything go on just as before, from where time stopped?"

"Yes," replied Broxted, "I'm sure of it."

"And all the people out there, every-

where in the world—for them apparently no time will have passed?"

"Come to think of it, no."

"Then we've got to wait!" Vee exclaimed. "Don't you see? Time stopped precisely at midnight, and it must resume exactly at that time, even if it is a day late!"

"Good Lord, that's right," Broxted said, looking at his watch. "Otherwise, according to all clocks out there, the sun would rise two hours late in the morning! It's barely 10 p.m. now."

"And what about Bob and me?" Vee went on. "Crowds were waiting for us at the spaceport—including reporters and photographers, no doubt. It'll still be midnight of July 31st for them, and they'll still be waiting there. But no *Terra* in sight!"

Bob groaned. "I wish you'd quit thinking of these things! Well, tomorrow we'll simply have to give ourselves up to the reporters; we'll tell them we strayed off the radio beam, made a blind landing, and came on here to the doctor's house."

For the ensuing two hours Rac practised his movements with the miniature controls until they were sure there would be no slip-up. At last it was midnight and all was ready for the real test. Rac walked through the time barrier with ease and disappeared. Breathlessly they waited. Nothing happened.

Rac appeared again, puzzled. One of the controls, he told Broxted, was different than the one on the model. He showed him, and Broxted remembered that he'd made a slight change. He explained the difference to Rac, who nodded and entered the time zone again. It was then two minutes past midnight.

Broxted hovered around the time barrier, nervously tugging at his thinning hair. Vee and Bob went out onto the lawn. Almost fearfully they waited for the change to come, not knowing quite what to expect. But all remained the same; the city was dark and still and motionless. What had gone wrong. Had Rac failed after all? Had he forgotten the instructions? Had all the calculations been of no avail?

And then it came, with a stunning, frightening suddenness. For many hours

they had encountered an utterly silent world, and now, in the merest split-second, the city was as it had been before. A vast blanket of light leaped up and they heard a whole city roar back to life. . . .

BUT to the millions there had been no silence; there had been no cessation; nothing had been wrong. To all but three persons and a little Martian, it was still midnight of July 31st. . . .

On the one hundredth floor of the Aero Club Mike Bessini staggered back from the window with a curious presentiment of disaster, words tumbling from his lips; then everything was normal, and Mike passed a hand across his bewildered brow.

"Funny!" he muttered, "I could have sworn— Say, I guess I'd better see the doc first thing in the morning; maybe I've been working too hard."

In the casino beyond his private door the music and the dance number continued, no one aware that anything had been amiss.

In the vicinity of Cincinnati the wreckage of the huge passenger liner was found; but it was considered strange that no one had seen or heard the fatal plunge.

The man whom Bob had moved beyond the danger of the approaching car now looked back, terrified at the sudden screaming of the brakes, amazed at the alacrity with which he'd moved from the curb!

The roar of traffic and planes resumed; the stentorian newsboys shouted the headlines; the sign around the Times Building continued to spell out the news of the *Terra's* return. In a certain restaurant a pompous gentleman who had been about to attack the duck dinner on the table before him was amazed to see it vanish, seemingly under his very eyes! It was simply no longer there! After being revived he demanded to know what legerdemain was going on here. He stalked out furiously, refusing to pay his check and vowing that they'd no longer get his patronage.

And all Miss Della Jones did was make the front page with a heroic story and a three-column cut of her demonstrating just how she had held the revolver. The words

over her picture read: *Daring Girl Foils Bandit*.

She told reporters, "I simply don't know how it happened. When he pointed that gun at me I was so scared my knees were shaking. But I was awfully excited too, and I guess I just grabbed the gun without thinking—because suddenly there it was in my hand. I know I wouldn't do it again!"

There was a sensation when it was discovered that no less than forty-nine planes had crashed throughout the country that night. That many usually didn't crash in a month's time. Furthermore, it was discovered that all these planes had failed to have their gravity-control on. There were suspicions of sabotage; there were rumors of secret weapons in the hands of foreign powers; there were investigations galore, but they resulted in nothing. . . .

IN Broxted's laboratory Bob and Vee saw the time device for the first time. It stood there in the middle of the room, very visible now.

"You're about to witness the end of the first time machine," Broxted said bitterly as he began dismantling it. "And it'll be the last one if I can help it. For three years I worked on this, and for what? So I could send it a fraction of a second into the future. But, after all, it's for the best. I've proven that time travel is impossible; it must never be attempted again. I shall destroy my notes. And I could even rest contented if it weren't for one thing! I'll never be satisfied until I know why Rac could walk through that time barrier and we couldn't!"

Instinctively three pairs of eyes turned to the little Martian. At this, Rac fidgeted uncomfortably. They weren't really expecting him to speak, but Rac thought they were.

Rac touched the shiny machine again, lovingly, and said in a hesitant voice, "Maybe it would work on my world. Here your time does not affect me, so maybe our time would not—" Rac stopped, abashed, as though afraid they might laugh at his idea.

But they did not laugh. Broxted stared

at him a moment, then sank down into a chair. "Of course, Rac, you're right. It's as simple as that. Why didn't I think of it before? It's a new time theory! There's no time in empty space, of course, except when there's something out there for which it can exist, such as your *Terra*. And so it must be with worlds, a different time field affecting each world and the people of that world. If our time has no barrier for Rac, the Mars time should have no barrier for us!" Broxted was on his feet again, pondering this new idea.

Vee said, "Well, Doctor, we saw some gorgeous ruins of ancient cities up near the Martian polar cap. If your time experiment works there, you could go back and see what the race was like that Rac's descended from!" The idea seemed to intrigue her.

"That's all very well," Bob said, "but tomorrow we introduce Rac to the world—the world we promised him—and something tells me that's going to be a job! So what about getting some sleep?"

"I cannot sleep tonight!" Broxted said. He was dismantling his time device, carefully packing the parts away until the day he could continue the experiment on Mars. Rac stood beside him, watching each of those mysterious parts as it came out. The cowl-like frill over his eyes was beginning to ruffle again, denoting his growing excitement. Bob and Vee looked at each other and laughed.

"What's the matter?" Broxted asked, looking up.

"You'll find out! Good night, Doctor."

So Broxted, in blithe innocence, continued to dismantle his machine. And Rac, who had already fallen in love with it, gazed at the shining intricacies with his perpetual wide-eyed wonder. And Rac, being Rac, could not remain silent long.

For an hour, valiantly, Broxted answered Rac's incessant queries. Suddenly he realized this had every indication of going on forever! He looked at Rac half in respect, half in a sort of horror. He decided, with a sigh, that he'd better get some sleep after all.

THE END

• SCIENCE brings YOU a New Lease of Life!

And Fuller, Freer, Pulsating Life—not just mere day-to-day existence!

RADIANT VITALITY for Every Man and Every Woman!

HAVEN'T YOU OFTEN SIGHED AND SAID: "Ah, IF ONLY I COULD HAVE MY TIME OVER AGAIN?"
YOU CAN HAVE YOUR TIME OVER AGAIN—SCIENCE HAS PROVED IT.

HAVEN'T YOU OFTEN WISHED YOU COULD REALLY LIVE? WITH THE BOUNDLESS ENERGY TO ENJOY LIFE TO THE FULL, TO BE FILLED WITH HAPPINESS EVERY MOMENT FOR THE SHEER JOY OF LIVING? THERE IS ECSTASY INDEED! AND IT DOES EXIST—IT DOES EXIST TO-DAY AS THE RARE PREROGATIVE OF THOSE FORTUNATE FEW (PERHAPS ONE IN TEN THOUSAND) WHO ENJOY REAL, POSITIVE, PERFECT HEALTH.

YOU, TOO, CAN HAVE RADIANT VITALITY AND ENDLESS ENERGY—SCIENCE HAS SHOWN THE WAY—THE NEW TRIED, TESTED, PROVEN WAY, THAT DOES NOT FAIL.

Glands Control Your Destiny!

From the moment you were born until the moment you die, every bodily activity is controlled by your ENDOCRINE or DUCTLESS GLANDS. Each evolves its special potent substances, the HORMONES—and their presence in, or absence from, your blood, determines what you are or what you become. Your height, your build, whether you are fat or lean, active or inactive, energetic or weak, clever or dull—your physical and mental life is wholly determined by your GLANDULAR activity.

Perfect, Positive Health!

It is a lamentable fact, but none the less true, that the vast majority of people living to-day do not know what health is, because they have never been healthy. Many of them imagine that they are healthy as long as they have no definite disease or illness. This is far from being the case! That is merely Negative Health. No one could ever confuse it with Positive Health who has once experienced the latter! Positive Health is not merely the absence of illness or disease, and those processes that wear out and destroy the bodily tissues; it is the active presence of a 100 per cent. efficient endocrine co-ordination, which daily rejuvenates and renews the tissues. It fills the body at all times with a boundless reserve of energy that makes itself known by a delightful feeling of slight tension—a feeling of being "wound-up," instantly ready to go anywhere and tackle anything! This sensation of exhilarating vitality indicates the presence of untiring strength and radiant health which will outlast the passage of the years. People who have this Positive Health do not age as others do, but seem to remain perpetually young and vital. They are saved by the accident of chance, the lucky possessors of perfect endocrine co-ordination. Now this glorious health and happiness can be YOURS!

GLANDULAR Treatment automatically normalises endocrine function, eliminates endocrine imbalance and secures perfect endocrine co-ordination! That means 100 per cent. Perfect Positive Health for YOU!



If GLANDULAR Treatment can do THIS for a man of 76, what can it do for YOU?

Read this extraordinary story:

"At 66 I was a decrepit old man with no trace left of my youthful vigour. My body was senile, what hair I had was white, my skin was yellow, wrinkled, dry, my eyes were dull and lacking colour—my senility was distressing. I was an old croak with one foot in the grave.

"Then came the great change. I heard of British Glandular Products Ltd., and took their 'TESTRONES' Tablets. In a few weeks I was a new man!

"To-day I have, at 76, more vim and vigour than I had at 30, my incredible vitality astounds even me. I eat like a boy and sleep like a child, I read small print without glasses.

"Once again at 76, I am experiencing the joys of life to the full.

"(Signed) Digby H. de Burgh,
Port Washington, British Columbia."

The second of the two pictures reproduced above represents Mr. de Burgh as he is to-day in his eightieth year

Answer these Questions

ARE YOU AS STRONG AND VITAL AS YOU COULD WISH?

ARE YOU BECOMING STRONGER AND HEALTHIER, HOLDING YOUR OWN, OR DECLINING?

DO YOU SUFFER FROM LACK OF ENERGY?

ARE YOU QUICKLY FATIGUED?

NEVER REALLY WELL?

ARE YOU RUN DOWN, EXHAUSTED, OR OVERWORKED?

HAVE YOU SUFFERED FROM NEURASTHENIA OR NERVE STRAIN?

ARE YOU "NERVY" IN YOUR DAILY LIFE?

ARE YOU IMPATIENT, A WORRIER, EASILY UPSET?

HAVE YOU SUFFERED LOSS OR WEAKNESS OF YOUR VITAL POWERS?

GLANDULAR TREATMENT CAN PUT MATTERS RIGHT. IT IS BASED NOT UPON THEORY BUT UPON ASCERTAINED, SCIENTIFIC FACT!

How to find out more about it!

British Glandular Products Ltd. have specialised in the supply of Glandular and Hormone extracts since 1929, and their "TESTRONES" Tablets for the male sex, and "OVERONES" Tablets for the female sex, have brought untold benefits to countless numbers of people of both sexes and ALL ages for many years past.

There is no need for complicated expensive treatments—our easily assimilable gland extracts in tablet form will in a short while have a revolutionary effect on your general health and vitality.

Fill in coupon below and enclose 3d. stamp for booklet—"The Essence of Life"—giving you further particulars of these remarkable treatments—or send 15/- for trial bottle of 100 Male or 100 Female Gland Tablets, which will give you that radiant vitality and maximum efficiency, which alone makes life worth living.

TO BRITISH GLANDULAR PRODUCTS LTD. (Dept. PMA. 447), 37 CHESHAM PLACE, LONDON, S.W.1
Please send free Booklet—"The Essence of Life," a 3d. stamp is enclosed—OR Please send to following address:

(a) 100 "TESTRONES" Tablets (Male); (b) 100 "OVERONES" Tablets (Female), for which I enclose 15/- herewith.

(Please write in BLOCK LETTERS and STRIKE OUT tablets NOT required).

NAME

ADDRESS



by
NELSON
S. BOND

The World Within



Unseen, mighty, they muster their marching armies, the secret sentinels of the last uncharted frontier—the human body!

SCHLATER had more patience than his companion. His method would have been to tie Alderson securely, then extort his secret in one of the approved fashions. The Gestapo had taught him many little ways of stimulating conversation. A hot flame applied to bare soles, the mute insistence of a foot of rubber hose, that little trick with fine wire and the eyelids.

But Koshu, being a Jap, was impatient, nervously impetuous. He scowled when the old scientist claimed he had no blueprints for the instrument that stood in the center of the room, and when Alderson staunchly refused to explain its operation, the little man's hair-trigger temper flared. So did the automatic in his yellow fist. A look of stunned surprise came into the American physicist's eyes. He coughed, choked in his own blood, pitched forward, and lay still.

Schlater said ruefully, "That was not too clever, my friend. You should have forced him to explain before you shot him. This looks like no war machine I have ever seen."

"We have no time to waste," hissed Kochu. "Someone may walk in here at any

moment. We will not need any diagrams or explanations. We have the machine itself. That will tell us all we need to know. Let us take it to my place and study it. Give me a hand, please, friend? Steady, there! Up with it. *Aie*—maledictions!"

He jerked his hand from the machine, mopping blood from his right palm with a not-too-clean handkerchief.

"Curse it, that metal flange is sharp! Well, let us make haste. We must get out of here. Lift, please!"

Schlater lifted. The hour was late, the sky black, the street deserted. No one saw them carry the odd-looking, projector-like instrument across the pavement, put it into a station-wagon. Schlater lowered the side-screens carefully. Koshu, still nursing his injured hand, waited fretfully. A few minutes later gears ground; the station-wagon and its mysterious cargo sped away from the quiet laboratory in which lay the body of Dr. Robert Alderson, inventor.

SOME time afterward, in Koshu's quarters, they stood before their stolen toy, studying it. Their styles of approach to the new problem were typical of their

thought habits. More clearly than their appearances it typified the differences of the races from which they sprang.

Koshu was all feline eagerness as, black eyes gleaming, he strode about the machine in short, mincing steps, lingering here to touch a tube, there a coil, tracing with long, sensitive fingers the path of a wire; delving, conjecturing, leaping to half-inductive, half-deductive conclusions.

Schlater did not finger the instrument. He analyzed it with the cold, mental detachment of the Teuton. He, too, was identifying the purposes of the cryptic parts—but his probing was entirely cerebral. And he, too, was slowly reaching a conclusion.

As he studied, some untouched portion of his brain found time to be scornful of Koshu's nervous concentration. Schlater neither liked nor trusted the Nipponese agent. He collaborated with him only because to do so was in accordance with orders issued to all Nazi agents in the United States.

Inasmuch, read the general orders, as a friendly understanding exists between our two nations, members of our Intelligence will cooperate, whenever expedient, with agents of the Japanese government. It is recommended, however, that discretion be employed in permitting valuable secrets to fall into the hands of our allies—

Schlater had followed the first part of his orders. Learning that Dr. Alderson had completed a new war machine, an instrument which the childishly hopeful Americans believed might be the "weapon to end all wars," he had joined forces with Koshu to steal that secret. Their carefully plotted effort had been successful, as was evidenced by the glistening projector that now stood before them. And Schlater wondered how far his "allegiance" with Koshu should now go.

If this weapon were, indeed, all it was rumored to be, and a growing conviction assured him it was, it was "a valuable secret." As such, it should be communicated to the Nazi—and only to the Nazi—government. A war weapon shared by two countries is quartered in value. Therefore . . .

He glanced guardedly at the Jap, just in time to find Koshu's beady black eyes intent upon him. Koshu's voice was high-pitched with the excitement now.

"Well, Schlater? You understand its purpose?"

Schlater did, now. Or at least he thought he did. The curious, parabolic arrangement of the convex lenses gave him the needed key—that and the wiring which determined the concentration of focal radiation on a point established by a series of verniers. It was a staggering conception; one, Schlater admitted reluctantly to himself, of unparalleled genius. It made of this innocent-appearing projector a mighty weapon, a weapon that could, indeed, end wars. Or, in the hands of the proper persons, it could pave smooth the path of conquest.

But he shook his head. He said, "I don't know. We may have been hoaxed. There seems to be nothing dangerous in this maze of wires and coils."

"You think," queried Koshu, "it is worthless?" And a frown creased his forehead; his eyes looked worried. Scorn, mingled with an urge toward laughter, stirred within Schlater. Then he had guessed right. Koshu's intellect was not shrewd enough to grasp this novel, terrifying concept. Such an idea was beyond the yellow man's mental powers.

"Utterly worthless," said Schlater negligently. He shrugged. "We might have guessed as much. You know these *verdammt* Americans. Always straining toward the fantastic, the impossible end. Oh, I suppose there is some slight logic behind the machine. Maybe it could be made to work." He paused. "Suppose we try? Let us attach it. Apparently this is a small scale model, designed to operate on house current. If you will plug it in, *mein Freund*?"

Koshu darted to the wall socket, inserted the plug that fed current to the strange projector. For a moment his back was to Schlater, and the Nazi agent's hand went toward his pocket. He stilled the movement with an effort.

This was, after all, Koshu's apartment. Undoubtedly he had friends here. The

bark of a Luger at this hour might rouse them, end forever Schlater's chance of winning complete possession of the projector. And there was another way. A better way. If the instrument worked as he thought. . . .

Koshu was again at his side, fretfully eager.

"What now, Schlater?"

Schlater stepped to the machine, pressed a button briefly, experimentally. As he did so, current sang its high, whining song. The muzzle of the projector brightened; from it diffused a weaving spiral of light.

Koshu squealed in delight.

"It does work, Schlater! What is it? A death ray? A sonic beam?"

Schlater snapped off the light swiftly, grateful for Koshu's single-mindedness. The Nipponese agent, fascinated by the spiral of color, had failed to notice the more significant result for which Schlater had been watching. The weird effect the beam had had upon objects on the far end of the room. The Morris chair, that picture on the wall—

He muttered, "A moment, *bitte*. There is an adjustment to be made." He fingered another of the verniers. The scale bore numbers. He set the vernier at the number "4." That, he judged, should be about right. Koshu would be about four feet away when the beam was turned upon him.

The Jap was staring at him narrowly.

"What are you doing, friend Schlater?"

"Just experimenting. You want to find out how the machine works, *nicht wahr?*"

"Yes, but—" Koshu's small hands gestured. In the movement he tensed the muscles of his wounded right hand; the cut split afresh and he winced. "You know more than you have told me. You're hiding something, friend Schlater!"

"Don't be a fool!" Schlater had finished his preparations now. All but one thing. An equalizing correction to be made on the projector lens. That done, it would be but the work of seconds to end this little farce. One swift movement of the projector, the pressure of a finger, and Koshu would be eliminated. The Reich would not have

to share this knowledge with a publicly embraced, but secretly detested ally.

It was then that Schlater made his mistake. Eager to complete his task, he stepped to the front of the projector. His hands sought the lens. Then, from the corner of one eye, he glimpsed sudden motion. Koshu, a triumphant glimace on his lips, was leaping forward. Schlater bellowed harsh warning.

"Koshu—be careful!"

He spoke too late. With a shrill burst of laughter, the Son of Heaven clawed the button. A mist of golden flame flooded the projector's nozzle, suffused Schlater with a fiery pain!

BLINDED, dazed, numbed, his flesh acrawl with a maddening sensation of contractile pressure, Schlater fought to stagger from beneath that radiant downpouring. But the golden mist followed him. Koshu, handling the projector, was training it upon his "ally" with deliberate, deadly accuracy. And there was gloating mockery in the Jap's gibes.

"So you thought Koshu a fool, eh, Schlater?"

Schlater screamed, "Turn it off, Koshu! Before it is too late! *This weapon condenses matter!*"

"I know," laughed the Nipponese. "Your Aryan pride did not let you believe another mind could be as quick as your own, did it, Schlater? You underestimated Koshu."

Schlater tugged despairingly at his pocket, but once more the Jap anticipated him. Before he could shoot, Koshu's hand stretched forth and wrenched the gun from him as if it were a child's toy. And Schlater saw now, with a burst of horror, why the weapon had been so easily torn from his grasp.

Because he was shrinking! Koshu's hand was gigantic. The walls were racing away from him at a frightful speed. The eye of the lens now above him was as large as his head, almost as large as his body! The ceiling had disappeared, lost in a vague nebulosity. The soft carpet beneath him seemed to slip in all directions from under his feet. He staggered and reeled,

finding he must keep in motion in order to stay upon his feet.

The ray burned down upon him, and through its golden aura he glimpsed the Cyclopiian face of Kosku grinning at him. A great, pocked visage, mottled and brownish, coarse with occasional weed-like tusks of beard. Kosku's voice seemed to be deeper. Its taunting was thunder in his ears.

"So, little one, the first man dies before the new weapon that will make *my* nation ruler of the world! How does it feel to be the size of a kitten? Ah, you run? You flee? It is useless. But take courage, Schlater. Kosku will spare you the final ignominy. When you have dwindled to the size of a louse, I wish 'crush you—*like this!*'"

A ponderable darkness came between Schlater and the blinding sun; like a colossal Juggernaut it moved inexorably down upon him. He screamed, his voice a high, thin bleating in his ears, and tripped and fell upon a spiny trunk of wool, rose and scampered from beneath Kosku's massive foot.

Fear lent wings to his feet. The Gargantuan boot missed him by inches. Inches that, even as he scrambled, became yards. For that brain-seething pressure still flamed in his body; in some dim corner of his mind he was aware that the beam was still upon him, he was still shrinking. Where this would end he could not tell—nor dared he guess. The carpet that had once been a soft surface beneath his feet was now a granite-strewn plateau, grim-ringed with the leafless spines of fibrous growths. No longer was there a room, walls, or a ceiling, or a machine. There was just this drab, gritty wasteland, and an ochre sky from which hot, wracking beams scorched him deeper and yet deeper into the realms of nothingness.

A remnant of logic mad him try to figure his present size, but the thought defied all computation. He was microscopic; that he knew. If grains of dust were, to him, mountains . . . if even now clefts appeared in solid terrain, tumbling him downward to imponderable depths . . .

Countless miles and aeons above him

there was a dull and sullen roaring, cadenced but indistinguishable to Schlater. Stark fantasy had its will with him. It was the elder gods he heard, the gods of thunder, and the sun was blotted by their wrath. Actually, it was Kosku who now, upon his hands and knees, was seeking some faint sign of the "ally" whom he had thrust into the unimaginable. The thunder was Kosku's voice, screaming in rage and disappointment. "Then you think thus to escape me, mannikin? But you shall not. I shall crush the life from your puny body, hammer you to a pulp!"

His voice lifted to a bellow. Heedless of his wound, Kosku beat and pounded on the carpet. Dust rose thickly, and blood stained the dun as Kosku sobbed and cursed and clawed the carpet like a mad thing. But there was no sign of Schlater. He was gone. The Jap rose, weeping with rage, and cut off the current. A moment he stood there, gazing mutely at the empty floor, a long, long moment.

THE wrath of the thunder gods howled above him; a typhoon screamed vast winds about his ears, caught and spun him, hurled him viciously into the depths of a spongy thicket. Jet blackness surrounded him, now that the sun had been blotted out. Somewhere above raged the fuller fury of the wind; the ground beneath him trembled and rocked. His world was a madman's dream in which small objects at his side grew while he watched, towered skyward, becoming monstrous, awesome impossibilities. New scenes sprang from nothingness. Valleys became ridges, pebbles boulders, as he slipped and skidded perilously through a treacherous universe.

Schlater dared not guess what yet might lie ahead. All he knew was that the persistent throbbing still tingled in his veins; that with each new breath his body became more minute. A memory came to him of a theory he once had heard; that there might be worlds within worlds, solar galaxies within atoms of the world on which once, a normal human, he had dwelt and dreamed and plotted for glory. If so, he was not far from learning the truth or falsity of this theory.

Out of the darkness came a strange, new feeling of sultriness and increased pressure. Warmth was about him, and movement. His mind reeling under the impact of this new mystery, he cast himself from his latest refuge and ran on tottering legs toward—he knew not what.

He had taken perhaps a half-dozen faltering steps when he felt upon him an insistent, wrenching tug, a sort of dreadful suction from above. He fought against it with the desperate fury of a doomed man, but the violent force became more potent very instant. He tried to cry out, but the cry died in his throat. Pain cut through him with the edge of a honed blade, his muscles knotted in agony, the very marrow of his bones seemed wracked with torment.

Once again, and futilely, he kicked out in a blind panic, but his attempt to free himself was waste and hopeless motion. There came a sense of lifting swiftness. A giddiness nauseated him. His head felt weirdly light; his body sagged with impotence. He had no longer the strength with which to fight his fate. He surrendered, suddenly and completely, and all was black.

It was a strange world in which he awakened. He lay on a narrow shelf, scant inches above the crest of a sluggish stream that poured endlessly down the corridor of a vast, high-domed tunnel. There was no sky above him, no earth beneath; nothing but this plunging stream and the smooth, washed, plastic bore that was its aqueduct. But faint and far-off, in the direction toward which the river coursed, Schlater could hear a sound familiar to his earthly ears. The rhythmic pounding of a machine.

He rose, weak, dazed, uncertain, but taking courage from the fact that he still lived! And in the equally hopeful fact that the scene about him did not change before his eyes. Apparently he had reached the end of his mad journey in size; the period of his diminution had ended.

And if so, hope was not yet dead! What if his adventure had brought him to some microscopic universe? What if there were no beings like himself (Schlater was a logical man) in this murky world? There

must be intelligence of some sort. The mathematical perfection of the tunnel argued that; it represented an engineering feat of no mean scope. And the beat of machinery off in the distance—where there were machines there must be thinking creatures to build them. Could he but find these builders, win their friendship.

Well, he had studied the machine of Dr. Alderson. With persistence and effort, Schlater thought he could build its counterpart, return to the world from which he had come, and avenge himself on the traitorous Kosku.

Spurred by this thought, he studied his surroundings more carefully. The ledge on which he now stood was not constant, it was an accidental hardening or encrustation on the wall of the tunnel. He could not, then, walk to his destination as a man might explore the depths of Paris in the bowels of the sewage system. And there were no water craft. All he could do, for the present at least, was trust himself to the mercies of the stream. Swim with the current down the tunnel or feed-pipe, resting whenever opportunity presented itself, until he found himself in a more favorable location.

Gingerly he lowered himself from the shelf. The stream was pleasantly brackish, and, so near as he could tell in the semi-gloom, a pale, muddy, yellowish color. The air he breathed was heavy and sickly sweet, but it bore no trace of the offal taint he had feared.

Apparently the aqueduct was part of a power plant, not a portion of a drainage system.

The current was deep and strong, the water viscous. It tugged at his foot. He loosed his hold on the ledge and found himself drifting swiftly down the tunnel. He had but to paddle gently to keep himself afloat.

HIS eyes were becoming more accustomed to the gloom now. He noticed, with increasing wonderment, several things he had not previously recognized. One of these was the intricate construction of the feedline in which he swam. It was not, as he had first thought, a single, large tunnel;

it was a labyrinthine network of small corridors, all leading into this major aqueduct. His sweeping passage bore him, in short seconds, past a half hundred tiny doorways, each sealed with tiny, automatically-operated portals of what appeared to be a plastic substance of some kind. These seemed to move with a predetermined rhythm. As he swam past one, it opened momentarily and a sudden gout of water cascaded upon him. Something sharp and hard struck him, bruised him. His hand, instinctively leaping to the object, identified it as a bit of spiny bone, like the skeleton of a coral.

It had, he saw fearfully, been gnawed clean, and for the first time a doubt entered his mind. He had placidly assumed himself to be alone in this watery grotto—but could he be sure? There might be other life here, dangerous antagonists. He sought, and found, the case-knife strapped to his calf.

As though his newborn fears had fathered the actuality, he saw, suddenly then, the first of the denizens of this weird place. A trap vent opened in the wall of the tunnel before him, and from it wriggled a creature that brought a choked cry to Schlater's lips.

It was a sallow, shiny, serpentine monster almost half again as large as Schlater. It had no eyes, but in its thick, wedge-shaped head was a gaping, toothed vent that was its maw; and from the tip of its proboscis writhed two wiry antennae that now stirred inquisitively in Schlater's direction. It spun, a hundred coarse-haired cilia palpitating, and darted toward him.

Schlater, shocked to action, churned the water in a swift, fearful desperation. The creature whisked towards him, its maw opening hungrily. His arm raised, his knife slashed once, twice, and yet again at the blind face of the monster. It recoiled before that biting edge. A thin ichor oozed from the wounds; the water churned and boiled as the injured water-thing sought to close in upon its quarry and still avoid the knifing pain.

Sheer chance saved him then, for suddenly beside him was another rimy ledge,

similar to that on which he had found himself at first. With a scrambling effort Schlater dragged himself onto this. The sea-thing followed his scent blindly, butted its still-dripping head against the ledge a foot below Schlater, then seemed to lose him. A moment it lingered there, its triangular head weaving back and forth in mute querulousness; then it wriggled off to the other side of the tunnel. A moment later it was burrowing, with a series of nauseating snuffles and mouthings, a ragged hole right through the wall of the aqueduct.

To what purpose, for what purpose, Schlater could not begin to guess. All he did know was that his forehead was damp and cold, his body quivering with disgust, his stomach churning with nervous fear. What kind of monster was this that could digest smooth structural plastic—and why?

He saw, then. It did not add to the quietude of his nerves. For before his eyes he saw the snakelike beast curl up within the tiny cavern it had burrowed, proceed to split in half, and vomit up a hundred, tiny, slimy simulacra of itself! The beast's nauseous puppies, each as large as Schlater's hand, turned instantly on their parent, tore it to bits, and gulped every morsel of the rent body!

Nor did their feeding end there. His eyes sharpened by this experience, Schlater saw now that there were still other life forms swarming in the humid cavern. Those pallid objects he had dismissed as stalactite growths, pending from the high, arched ceiling, he saw, now, were living blobs of matter. And in the water itself were still other mobile forms. Some, so tiny that they would have escaped his attention entirely had it not been for this sickening revelation, others very large. There was one form of fish or crustacean something like a clam, except that its "shell" was translucent, its shape that of a roughly hewn crystal. One constant form was a curious, disc-like creature with almost invisible cilia; these were a pale, yellowish color. The serpent puppies seemed to find them a delicacy, diving eagerly into the stream to fish them out, ripping them apart with sharp, hungry

teeth. These platter-shaped things were completely defenseless apparently. When torn, they exploded with a sharp, popping sound, and Schlater thought he could detect the faint ammoniac smell of ozone whenever this happened. They were like the blowfish of Gulf waters, terrifying to look at, helpless in battle.

And as the puppies ate, they grew. As they grew to the size of the parent that had attacked Schlater they, as had the parent, ceased their feeding, burrowed new cubby-holes for themselves in the wall of the tunnel. Within the space of minutes the entire chamber was pock-marked with their burrowings; where had been one monster, pregnant with loathesome young, now the corridor seethed with this hateful life form.

The tiny shelf upon which Schlater crouched, trembling, had long since been undermined by this horde of swiftly breeding beasts. It would not be long now, he knew, before it gave way, catapulting him into their midst. And when that happened . . .

He shuddered.

BUT at that moment a wild activity developed amongst the wedge-headed monsters. A swift current seemed to course through them; then, as if advised by some telepathic warning, as one they turned for flight.

And Schlater saw why. There was splashing movement from the farther end of the tunnel. Out of the gloom appeared a solid host of colorless, transparent creatures that slipped through the water with the fluid ease of gigantic amoebae.

Even before the wrigglers had assembled for flight, the first of the newcomers had invaded their midst. Schlater saw its long, colorless body expand before his eyes, stretch, grow pseudopods, and ingest a wriggler. The translucent body wall veiled, clouded, as strong acids digested the enemy—and the colossal amoeba was twisting toward another of its prey!

Everywhere the same scene was taking place. Here a wriggler, lashing out desperately with its countless cilia, swarmed high to the tunnel wall. Its pursuer calmly,

coldly, stretched tactile arms up the wall until it reached its quarry, devoured it piecemeal. There a wriggler, ripping and tearing with that ferocious maw, sliced an invader in two. Imperturbably another of the pale amoebae took up the battle where its slain brother had left off, destroyed the wriggler, then proceeded to devour its comrade's carcass methodically!

Schlater saw, now, that not only from one direction had the tunnel-guardians—for he guessed them to be that—come. Another regiment had swept down from the farther end of the tunnel; still others had entered the battle chamber from the side ports. Flanked thus from every side, with no reinforcements, the wrigglers never had a chance. Within the space of minutes the river had been swept clean of all wrigglers, the host of pale guardians disappeared to their posts, leaving behind a scattered few scavengers who tidied up by calmly devouring the slain bodies of friend and foe alike. Nothing escaped their painstaking house-cleaning save one life-form, the yellowish, disc-like, harmless creatures upon which the wrigglers had formerly feasted.

So fascinated had Schlater been by this battle that he had completely forgotten his own peril. Now he was sharply reminded of it. One of the tunnel-guards, scavenging the pockmarks beneath his tiny ledge, sensed his presence, quivered delicately, and stretched a pseudopod up toward him.

In panic desperation Schlater screamed and screamed again, hacked at that exploring arm with his knife. The blade passed through harmlessly; where it had gone, new flesh grew instantly. The tactile arm strengthened, crept up and tightened about Schlater, and then slid away again! The guardian, as though completely satisfied with Schlater, went on about his work!

He could not stay here; that was certain. And again hope blossomed within Schlater. Evidently he had been judged by the guardians of the tunnel and found harmless. Schlater wondered for a moment, fearfully, if these weird, amoeboid warriors were the ruling race of this new world in which he found himself. If so, his hopes were in vain. But if not—

Maybe, he thought hopefully, his presence had been discovered from afar by the real rulers? It was evident that they had some means of checking on all parts of their underground aqueduct. How else would they have sent this detail to destroy the invading monsters?

There was but one way to find out. Continue on his self-appointed journey toward the pump, the machine that continued to throb its rhythmic, hollow message of hope through the tunnel.

He hesitated a moment. Then, heart pounding, he drove once again into the racing flood. There was no attack. Instead, a gigantic, amoeboid watch-dog deserted its former tasks, slipped into the stream behind him, and followed him down the tunnel, for all the world like a patient bodyguard.

HOW many miles he traveled, Schlater had no way of guessing. The traveler marks distance by the passage of time; Schlater wore no watch, and in this murky tunnel, where never occurred a change of light, it might have been night or day, twilight or dusk.

But he had the feeling, as time passed, that he was getting somewhere near his goal. For one thing, the aqueduct down which he paddled was now larger than that in which he had first found himself. The transition had come about gradually, during one of many twists and turns.

For another, he was moving faster now. At first the stream had been sluggish. But now, as the steady pounding of the central power plant sounded deeper, nearer to his ears, the flood waters gathered momentum.

For a time his logical brain sought an analogy between this place and a possibly similar location on the Earth he had left behind him. But he could find none except in a dimly remembered passage from the poem of a mad Englishman of long ago:

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree;
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. . . ."

But that, of course, was nonsense. For there were here no "gardens bright with sinuous rills," no "forests ancient as the hills."

Koshu!

The memory of the Jap's perfidy flooded back upon him, stirring him to sudden, renewed anger. Again he was **afire** with impatience to reach that mysterious, distant chamber where were the engines that utilized this stream. There to find creatures, intelligent inhabitants of this diminutive world. There to begin work on the machine that would bear him back to his own, now macrocosmic, universe.

The trip was not without incident. Once, as before, he was attacked by a denizen foreign to this tunnel. This time his antagonist was a creature so contrary to common sense that Schlater had difficulty defining it to himself as living. It was more like an animated problem in higher mathematics. Its form was that of a spiral convolute of the third order; it had no evident organs of digestion, breeding, or sense.

Yet, lacking these things, it gave Schlater a bad moment as it came spiraling toward him like a monstrous corkscrew, studiously intent on making him a *pièce de résistance*. This time there was no fortunate ledge on which he could take refuge. Had it not been for his silent follower, his adventure would have ended abruptly there beneath the vaulted roofs of the dim, jointed caverns of the infinitesimal. But even as the looped attacker weaved toward him, the guardian amoeba charged past, brushing him out of danger's way, to fight his battle for him.

It was no battle. At the sight (or sense, Schlater could not guess which) of the pallid protector, the spiraloid spun in panic flight. Futilely, for the gigantic protoplasm swelled to a huge cup, inexorably surrounded its foe, and once more Schlater looked with shocked, wondering eyes upon the filmy acid clouds churning within his guardian as it ingested its prey.

And ever the sound of the motors deepened. For this Schlater was increasingly glad, for now a new factor began to

disturb him. Up to this time there had been air space between the surface of the stream waters and the roof of the tunnel. Now this space was being filled, more and more, by the waters, as from the countless tiny sub-passages came minor torrents to fill the aqueduct.

And the air, Schlater noted uncomfortably, was growing thicker, more offensive, less breathable. He had to labor, now, to breathe, and in his nostrils lingered an offensive, almost sulphurous odor. A new fear entered his mind. Perhaps he had been too sanguine in presuming that arrival at the mysterious "machine" would mean his salvation? Suppose this feed-line led directly into the bowels of some gigantic force-pump performing some fathomless function? What then would happen to him?

But, no, that was unlikely. The builders of this tunnel must have prepared exits. How else to account for the fact of his silent protector. No, soon he would come to an open space. There he would find intelligent creatures. Perhaps not men like himself, but at least reasoning creatures with whom he could make peace, to whom he could explain his plight and his desires.

IT happened so swiftly that he was unprepared. Not that he could have done anything about it. He was hopelessly within the grip of the forces that stirred about him, by will or main force he could not have prevented that which occurred.

But one instant he was drifting down the tunnel, the next the throb of the nearing engine had risen to a clamoring roar. A deep, booming torment of sound that threatened his eardrums trembled the fibers of his body.

The flood which bore him swiftened, foamed, became a swirling, churning maelstrom. He saw, with a burst of horror, that what little air space there had been was now vanishing as the frothy waters boiled against the portals of a huge flood-lock!

He had time for one agonized glance toward his calm "protector," time to gulp

in one last, lung-filling draught of precious air—then that ponderous plastic gateway throbbled open! From inside came a tumultuous thunder of mighty forces at work, the ear-splitting rhythm of the machinery Schlater had dreaded. And then a terrible suction gripped him and the waters in which he struggled. Beaten, pounded, bruised by the weight of the torrent upon him, he was drawn into the heart of the clamorous chamber!

That he survived those next few seconds was a miracle in itself. The chamber into which the aqueduct fed was gigantic. Schlater caught a fleeting glimpse of tremendous curved walls meeting in an arched dome over his head; felt, rather than saw, the brain-maddening, angry crimson of those walls. Like the pulsant, scarlet drapes on the walls of Poe's *House of Death*.

Then he was being dragged down, down, into unfathomable depths. Water boiled and bubbled about him, frightful pressure racked his bones, threatened to force the last ounce of precious air from his straining lungs. All about him strange bodies seemed to live, fighting and struggling; he was tossed and spun like a chip in a steaming cauldron. Hungry fingers ripped the clothing from him, and his flesh was alive with pain from the brutal pummeling.

Then, as suddenly as he had dropped, he found himself rising. And again he was on the the surface of the water, a spent tatter of humanity. He panted fresh air into his lungs, struck out violently for the nearest of the ruddy walls, hoping against hope he might find a foothold, a fingerhold on one of those smooth, curving surfaces.

Clawed hands scratched at the wall, but his effort was vain. For these walls, unlike those of the tunnel through which he had entered, were soft and yielding; they seemed made of a spongy, fibrous material. They gave beneath his frenzied attack. In his delirium it seemed that all the walls were suddenly racing away from him now; that the mighty cavern was expanding.

Then one wall sheared away entirely into a gaping vent, the retreating roof of the cavern came pounding down like the

crimson gavel of the gods—and again he was seized in a terrific suction, thrust headlong through a second lock, into another thundering chamber.

Down again, down he went into the maelstrom, floundering, fighting, struggling like a madman to sustain that tremendous pressure; then up, up to a breath of air, up to clutch, screaming, at resilient scarlet walls; to claw horribly at barriers that shrugged him off, throbbing, paling, like the huge muscles of some giant.

Muscles!

The simile was born out of Schlater's madness. But the instant it occurred to him, sanity came back to his mind like the douche of icy waters. Muscles! Schlater was a logical man. And now, even though about him beat and thundered a cacaphony that had long since destroyed his sense of hearing, he brought the force of that cold, Teutonic logic into play.

He understood now, wondering why he had not guessed the answer before, where he was. He understood the tunnel, the rimy excrecence on which he had found himself, the battle of the monsters.

He understood, suddenly and completely, the chamber to which the aqueduct had borne him, knew the purpose of the "watch-dog," knew what his eventful fate must be. . . .

There was no last, lingering hope now. No chance of ever returning to the world outside. For in these murky caverns were no intelligences to befriend him, no mortals with which he might build the machine that would be his salvation. His destruction was a matter of time. Die he must. But with him could, and *must*, die . . .

SCHLATER was a logical man. And he still had his case knife. He slipped it now from its sheath. Strangely, he found strength to do that which he must. Against the incessant pounding of the waters, he fought his way to the wall of the chamber, that great, towering wall of crimson muscle. All his strength and all the fury of his new vengeance was in his right arm as he plunged the knife again and again into that yielding wall.

He had the satisfaction of seeing the

wall rip into jagged shreds about him before the avengers came. The huge, amoeboid forms that had at one time protected him came swirling toward him in hordes as he hacked and carved at the wall before him. Then one was upon him; its mobile body was expanding into the cup-like sac that, Schlater knew, would soon engulf him, burning his body into nothingness with its scalding acid secretion.

Once more and gloriously, with a choked laugh on his lips, he slashed at the faltering, throbbing wall. Then he thrust the knife deep and true into the wall, and turned to face his certain destroyers.

THE F.B.I. man nodded toward the odd-looking projector in the middle of the floor.

"Get that out of here, Peters," he said, "and keep it out of sight. From now on that's government property. We mustn't take any chances on its being stolen again." He turned to the telephone in the room, dialed his superior.

"Chief? Thompson speaking. We found it. It hasn't been damaged. Young Alderson's with me. He says he knows how to operate it. And, Chief, you'd better throw a cordon around the city. The German is missing—Schlater. Apparently he and Koshu had a row. He killed the Jap and skipped. Get on his trail. Okay, Chief. I'll be back with the medical report."

He turned to the medical inspector, now rising from Koshu's side.

"I don't know, Thompson. I'll have to perform an autopsy to make sure. It's the strangest thing I ever saw. At first I thought it might have been death by poisoning—that open wound in his palm, you know. A virulent infection might have attacked him through that opening.

"But that's not it at all. It's some form of heart failure—but the most violent I've ever encountered in all my years of medical experience. His heart seems to have suddenly, and for no reason at all, burst like a rotten fruit! It's ripped into a thousand pieces. Just as if it had been sliced to ribbons—from the inside. . . ."

THE END

at your service!

ON THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH



NORMAN HURST and **FREDDIE MILLS**



bring you
all that is new
in the fight game
in

Boxing & Wrestling 2/-

MAGAZINE

PRICE

ON SALE AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSAGENTS

*Do not miss this new magazine with the complete
international slant for combat fans*

If you wish to have a new issue of BOXING & WRESTLING sent to you every month at the same time that it is put on the news stands, please fill in the coupon below

Welder Publications, Studio 6, 412 Fulham Road, London S.W. 6.

Gentlemen:

Please enter my subscription for one year. I enclose 26/- in full payment.
1 year subscription 26/-.

Name

Address

City County

Allow 60 DAYS before your subscription starts

THE WEAPON

~~~~~By H. B. OGDEN~~~~~

THE council-room was in absolute silence. From a raised dais, five Martians looked down upon the Earthman standing before them. Their strange feline faces were entirely expressionless. Only their eyes exhibited signs of life. Glowing greenly, they seemed to pierce the innermost core of Preston Calvin's being.

The Chief Elder of Mars spoke from his seat in the center. "Your request for an audience has been granted, Earthman. What do you want of the Elders of Mars?"

"Assistance." Calvin's voice cut like a knife. With these Martians bluntness was the best diplomacy. "Assistance in our fight against the forces of ruthlessness and evil."

The Chief Elder's gray vibrissae twitched. "Mars does not interfere with Earth. We give no assistance."

"You are doubtless unacquainted with the facts, Excellency," Calvin urged. "In the name of all humanity, I beg for aid. Democracy must not lose."

"Affairs on Earth have been followed with keen interest," came the calm answer, "but every world must work out its own destiny."

Calvin's shoulders sagged. He had been warned of this emotionless super-race, this product of countless eons of evolution, but the reality was hard to face.

He shifted his ground. "Aid us for your own sakes then, if not for ours. If the brutes win, Earth will be dominated by a cult of hate. Mars itself may not be safe from danger."

"We don't fear Earth; you should know that." There was no anger, merely the coldest indifference in the Martian's voice. "We allowed you to colonize the Jovian and Saturnian worlds which we ourselves had forsaken long before, but Mars itself we will keep."

Calvin sighed. "I do not ask for material assistance. I want only a weapon. You, who are so powerful and wise, who could

have had a universe yet rejected it. Surely of your vast knowledge you can spare a crumb to the younger civilization of Earth, that we, too, may wax great and flourish?"

There was a low murmur from the five assembled Elders. The Chief Elder spoke slowly in answer. "You are right—our wisdom is great. It is so great that we know this: Every civilization must work out its own destiny. We shall give no assistance."

Their indifference seemed impregnable, but Calvin forced himself to one last effort.

"You fear, I suppose, that I ask for a powerful instrument of destruction with which to lay Earth waste. That you would be right to refuse. The fact is, however, that I ask for the opposite—for something which played its part in your own history."

"We have studied the history of Mars and discovered a few things. Your early history, like ours, is one of war and destruction; then, overnight, you emerged into your present emotionless state, in which war and evil cannot exist. We have discovered how that change came about, and we ask for a similar change back on Earth."

A pause here elicited no answer other than a motion to continue.

"There exists a gland in the human body, atrophied and apparently useless—the pineal. There is a way, known only to you, to activate that gland and restore its proper functions. These functions, we feel sure, are to act as counterweights to the fear and anger-producing adrenal glands."

"A world with functional pineals would then be a world without anger or fear, a world of reason. Is Mars ready to refuse information so beneficial? It would be against reason."

"You are wrong," the Chief Elder informed him. "It is not against reason. Does Earth wish to be as emotionless as Mars?"

"No," Calvin admitted. "but to go that far is unnecessary. Yours is an extreme of hypertrophied pineals. In great dilution, the chemical I seek would merely soften the violent emotions of fear, anger, and hate. That is all."

"You know then that it is a chemical that produces the desired effect?"

"Yes, and an inorganic one," was the



answer. "A small bottle of iodine dropped in a city reservoir will restore to normal the thyroids of the entire city. The 'pineal chemical' would, no doubt, react similarly. I ask only the method of preparation of this chemical. That is all the weapon I wish."

The Chief Elder of Mars leaned closer to Calvin and spoke very softly indeed. "Once Mars, facing destruction, found the means of its own salvation. Earth must do likewise. Were the raising of a finger all that were required of us to save it, the finger would not be raised. Earth must save itself."

Calvin's lips twisted in a wry grin as he realized that his last bolt had been shot. His hand was played; his aces trumped. He turned away in despair and left the assembly room.

His mind worked feverishly as he was whirled upward to Mars' dead and barren surface. Somehow he must snatch the knowledge from the reluctant lips of these living icebergs. Without it he could not return to a world where democracy clung precariously to its last foothold on the western seaboard of what was once the United States. Rather he would die in space.

It was then he thought of Deimos!

**D**EIMOS! The giant laboratory of Mars!

There, the scientific secrets of the race were assembled—even that of the weapon he had asked for. And he formed the mad plan of assaulting that impregnable fortress of knowledge and carrying off by force what he could not obtain by his pleas and prayers.

He refused to consider, for reasoning would have halted him. Once, before the super-race of Mars had been discovered, an exploratory expedition had attempted a landing on Deimos and been warned away by a strange space-vessel. When a second and larger expedition ignored the warnings and pressed on, they never returned.

Calvin had no illusions, then, as to the certain failure of his attempt—but he did not care. The alternative to success was martyrdom, and in his present state of

mind that would have been as welcome.

The hours it took to reach the little moon passed with incredible slowness, but finally its jagged crags loomed before him. As he circled it cautiously he wondered if there were some sort of protecting screen surrounding it. That was the first obstacle, for Calvin dared not land until he could assure himself he would not be killed in the process.

He made a few adjustments and one of two lifeboats with which the ship was equipped slid from its sheath and slowly floated down to the moon beneath. It was an old trick, but an effective one.

Under the infinitesimal pull of Deimos the boat seemed scarcely to travel, in spite of the initial push. Half an hour—three-quarters—a full hour, and then the tiny projectile hit the surface. There was a small smudge visible as it landed, a tiny cloud of dust raised by its impact, and there it lay, entirely unharmed.

A faint glow of triumph welled within him. There was no screen!

Gently he lowered the ship and landed in a hollow, a miniature valley on the side away from Mars. The sun would not reach it for a while yet; and there the ship, hidden in the dark recess, might most easily escape detection.

He emerged, a muffled, space-suited figure, teetering uncertainly on Deimos' rocky floor. First he impressed the surroundings deeply on his mind, that he might have no trouble locating the ship when and if he returned, and then turned his thoughts toward the laboratory itself.

His problem was threefold: to find a way into the lab, to avoid notice, and to locate the pineal chemical.

First, he must locate the entrance.

He tried to move, but scarcely had his leg muscles contracted when he felt himself thrown off his feet, arch high into the air, and float downwards with tantalizing slowness. When he attempted to raise himself he went into a second crazy, tumbling somersault.

Calvin cursed bitterly. On Deimos he was practically weightless and almost entirely helpless. It was a case for ingenuity. Clutching an outstretched projection of

rock, he pulled himself forward, using an absolute minimum of force. Over he went, heels high above his head, his grip broken. This time, however, he had made horizontal progress, and when he came to rest it was some ten yards from where he had started.

He had no idea where he was going, nor did he care much. Obviously, remaining in one place would get him nowhere, whereas moving he ought to stumble upon something sooner or later. That was his vague rationalization. Then, in the midst of one of his weirdly-flopping handsprings, he went rigid and fell flat, scarcely breathing.

The harsh, discordant tone of Martian speech sounded from somewhere ahead. His receiver picked up the sounds clearly, but he could understand nothing of it. He understood Martian only when spoken slowly, and as for speaking it himself—well, it was organically impossible for an Earthman to imitate the Martian sounds.

There were two of them. Calvin saw them through a cleft in the boulders at his right. He scarcely breathed. Had there been a screen? Were they searching for him? If so, he could not long hope to remain hidden.

Then, suddenly, he caught the words *rest period*, and speech halted as quickly as it had begun. One of the creatures walked speedily toward the ridiculously near horizon. Calvin envied his normal gait, while the other approached a wall of rock, touched a spring, and entered the cavity that yawned in response.

The Earthman's heart leaped in joyful astonishment. The gods of space were beaming kindly down upon him, for there before him was the means of entrance. He felt a bit of superiority over these Martians who hid their secrets so poorly.

Laboriously he inched towards the wall into which the other had gone. The tiny metallic lever was easily found; no attempt had been made to hide it. On Earth he would have immediately smelled treachery in this, but he knew well that the Martians were far too powerful and far too emotionless to stoop to trickery.

He entered, as he had expected, into an airlock. The inner door opened; he found

himself at the threshold of a long, narrow corridor, the walls of which shone with a soft yellow luminescence. It was perfectly straight, and its lack of cover dismayed Calvin. Yet it was empty, and he could do nothing but step inside.

Even the light Mars-normal gravity felt comfortable after his weightlessness as he strode the length of the corridor, his steel-shod shoes making no noise against the shock-absorbent floor. The corridor ended in a balcony, and there Calvin stood for the barest moment and gazed at the prospect before him.

**T**HE whole interior lay exposed, carved into one gigantic room, partitioned into levels and sections. Elevator shafts and supporting pillars shot up dizzying heights in bewildering multiplicity. Down below, so far that it seemed lost in haze, bulky machinery loomed. Nearer at hand an astonishing variety of apparatus of all types could be seen. And all about were scurrying Martians.

A door was ajar behind him, and into it he leaped. It led into an empty room, a closet or storeroom of sorts. There he unscrewed his helmet, took a deep breath of the fresh, invigorating air, and paused to consider his next step.

For the moment he was stalemated, for the place simply swarmed with Martians. His unbelievable luck was bound to break soon, and, indeed, he was not over-safe where he was. Then, suddenly, the yellow glow of the walls faded and died and in its place a dim ghostly blue appeared.

Calvin jumped to his feet in tense anticipation. Was this a signal which warned of his discovery? Had they been playing with him after all.

And then another change forced itself upon his attention. The busy noise that had pervaded the entire place had died down and given way to deep silence. Fear gave way to curiosity, and Calvin edged the door open very slowly and tiptoed out. The entire giant laboratory was bathed in the same weird blue light, and Calvin felt little cold fingers of uneasiness dance up and down his spine as he surveyed

what was now a realm of dimly-seen shadows and dark, sad-looking light.

He remembered the two words he had heard one of the Martians on the surface utter: *rest period*. This, then, was what was meant. His spirits rose again. His luck had held!

The next step was to locate the secret of the pineal chemical. As he glanced about at the murky expanse, so terrifying in its vastness and so mysterious in what it hid, he first realized the immensity of the task he had set himself.

He stopped and considered. The laboratory would have to be arranged in an orderly fashion to suit the Martians. He would first have to locate the section devoted to chemistry, and if that proved useless (supposing he still remained at large) he would try the biologic section.

The elevator, dimly seen in the blueness, was a short distance to the right. Fortunately, its power had not been shut off for duration of the *rest period*, and Calvin descended to the lowest level at a speed that left him standing, gasping.

Calvin drew his flashlight. He would have to use it now, daring all risk of discovery. Its thin shaft of light revealed him to be among giant structures which stretched higher than the beam could reach. The Earthman did not recognize them, in spite of a familiarity with Terrestrial science, but they seemed to have nothing to do with chemistry. Picking his way carefully through narrow lanes running between these structures, with the flashlight pointing the way at all times, he finally emerged into relatively open space.

Evidently he was in a power-room of sorts. At his right a gigantic motor lay idle, even in rest giving out a terrifying aura of strength of power. Directly ahead was a small atomic-power generator. It was with some interest that he inspected this, for Earth had as yet made only the first few stumbling steps in the direction of atomic power. But his time was limited and he passed on.

HE wandered into a spacious section of the laboratory occupied only by low tables on which shrouded objects lay,

bulking dimly in the blue light and jumping suddenly out of the shadows as the flashlight swept over them.

The odor of formalin stung Calvin's nostrils, and it struck him that he was in a dissecting room. He shuddered at the thought of what might lay under those concealing shrouds and hurried on quickly.

A little further he passed among wire cages, and the sickly smell of animal life rose to meet him. Martian "womboes," European "skorats," and common Terrestrial white mice squeaked and whined at the intrusion. Calvin scarcely glanced at them and passed on.

There were shelves and shelves of cubical bottles containing the quick-breeding Martian insect that had displaced the classical fruit-fly—even on Earth; rows and rows of bacterial cultures; piles upon piles of lenses, mirrors, and other optical paraphernalia. Calvin felt as if he were in some museum which at every turn presented something new and startling, but which never, under any circumstances, repeated itself.

He estimated having spent over an hour and a half in a vain search before stumbling upon a chemical supply room. Partitioned off by a low waist-high wall, its walls were laden from top to bottom by myriads of containers—glass, wax, and rubber—containing test solutions in infinite variety. Over all hovered the odors inseparable from chemicals, the sharp, tangy atmosphere which recalled vivid memories of chem courses back in college.

Upwards went the flashlight, to be stopped short by a "ceiling" which marked the bottom of the second level. One of the ubiquitous elevators was almost at his side. He stepped in and shot noiselessly upwards.

On the second level, and the third, and the fourth, much the same sight met his eyes. There were hosts of other supplies necessary to chemistry: beakers, flasks, burettes, all sorts of complicated glassware, rubber tubing, porcelain dishes, platinum crucibles.

Then he reached the experimental labs, and here he could not help but linger. There was a vat filled with a green,

miasmic gas, evidently chlorine, connected through a series of intricately arranged tubing (at present shut off by stopcocks) into a small beaker filled with a colorless liquid. Further away a pair of yard-long burettes dripped, ever so slowly, drops of cloudy fluid into two flasks filled with a simmering purple chemical.

At the far end, almost beyond the reach of the flashlight beam, was a complicated web of glass tubing, in the center of which a beaker sat spider-like over a small flame. A viscous, red liquid gurgled and bubbled within, and Calvin smelled the faint, tarry odor that issued.

The levels through which he rose seemed endless. Past the seventeenth he came upon the analytic labs. At the twenty-fifth he recognized organic chemistry set-ups; at the thirty-fifth, physical chemistry; at the fortieth, bio-chemistry.

It was a complete achievement worthy of the Martian supermen, yet through it all Calvin saw only defeat. All that he saw gave no slightest hint of the nature and identity of the pineal chemical, and upon not a single level had he been able to locate a single file of notes, let alone anything in the nature of a chemical library.

There was only the top level to be investigated now, and it was all but empty. It was very large, more than a hundred yards in each direction as nearly as he could estimate in the blue gloom, but all that occupied it were squat, cubical structures which stood flush against the wall.

There were hundreds of these, circling the entire room, all alike. They were a yard high, equally wide and equally deep, and each stood on four stubby legs. The side towards the center of the room was of cloudy, glass-like material, the rest were of featureless metal.

And on the top of each was etched in golden letters a single Martian ideograph, and below it a Martian numeral. Calvin understood its meaning immediately. It said "Summary 18."

Calvin's eyes narrowed—summary of what? The logical explanation would be that it was a summary of all chemical data known to the Martians, a chemical encyclopedia. He approached the cubes again with

devouring curiosity, noticed further that each cube was marked by a separate number, and selected the one marked "1."

Probing fingers located a protruding segment on the upper right hand corner of the side facing him. A slight pressure shoved it aside, revealing a small lever protruding from the center of a half-moon slit. Without hesitation, he edged the lever slightly to the left. **Immediately** the vitreous frontal face came to lie—a bright illumination from within making it resemble a television screen back on Earth.

Nor did this constitute all, for from the bottom of the screen a long column of print began working upwards slowly. Calvin read it slowly and laboriously, for the language was technical. It is difficult to learn a language one cannot pronounce and recognize at once. His guess had been correct. It was an encyclopedia, alphabetically arranged.

He turned back to the lever and replaced it in the centre, whereupon the movement of the queer, graceful Martian script stopped and the light went out. Again he moved it to the left, further this time, and the movement of the writing was measurably faster. Further and further he pushed the lever, and faster and faster flew the print until it became a grayish blur. Then Calvin stopped for fear of harming the mechanism and brought the lever back to center.

Now he pushed it to the right and the print moved in the opposite direction, speeding backward over the ground it had already covered, until the beginning was reached and the light extinguished.

**C**ALVIN rose with a sigh of satisfaction.

It was quite evident what the next move was to be. Find the article under the Martian word for "pineal gland," and there, if anywhere, he would find the information he had come to seek.

Now that he was so near his aim, Calvin felt a weakening in his knees.

But even as he felt all sorts of clammy fears rising within him, he skimmed down the row of cubes, searching for that article and thanking his stars that the Martians saw fit to use an alphabetical arrangement,

Upwards drifted the cold, emotionless print, thousands of words on every aspect of the pineal gland. Calvin followed it breathlessly, understanding not more than a tenth, and watching, watching for the one vital fact he was after.

And then it came, so suddenly that it caught him unawares and passed him by. He laughed hysterically as he turned the machine backwards, and for five minutes shut it off altogether until the almost painful sensation of relief that overwhelmed him had subsided.

Over and over again he read the short description of the chemical and its method of production. It was only bromine, an element that sea-water was filthy with, yet with a difference. The pineal chemical was an isotope of that halogen; an isotope that was not to be found naturally and that would exist for only a limited period when produced artificially. In terse and cryptic language the nature and strength of the neutron bombardment which produced the isotope was described, and the description sank deep into Calvin's brain.

And then he was through, all through. To return to Earth—only that was left. Surely, after having completed so much against the laboratory and all of Mars, the return need not frighten him. A sense of bubbling triumph pervaded him, a triumph that shrieked aloud with laughter and then died suddenly.

The light changed! Dull blue gave way to bright yellow with a suddenness that left him gasping, bewildered, and blinded.

**M**ARTIANS sprang from nowhere and surrounded him. Calvin fell back, utterly bewildered at the sudden change of the situation. Then, as he recognized the stern, immobile visage of the Chief Elder in the midst of the throng, all emotion was drowned in one flood of tearing, blistering rage.

His needle-ray was drawn, cocked, and aimed in one motion, but in the icy gaze of the Martian potentate he felt his arm grow numb and lax. Struggle as he might, he could not compress the trigger finger. Dimly he heard the gun clang to the floor.

A long silence ensued, and then the

Chief Elder spoke. You did very well, Earthman. You were a little reckless, but quick at seizing opportunity."

A look of astonishment spread over Calvin's face. "You were playing with me?" he demanded. "You allowed me to hope and to all but attain my object that you might snatch it from me in the end?" He felt it difficult to breathe. "Then Martians are sufficiently emotional to indulge in cruelty, aren't they?"

Calvin suddenly felt weak and futile.

"I knew your moves from the first," the Chief Elder was saying. "We recognized the possibility of an attempted raid on Deimos as a result of your own individual psychology, and consequently removed the screen from the satellite; showed you the means of entrance; introduced a fictitious rest hour; and refrained from interfering until you had discovered your precious weapon. The experiment was an entire success."

"What are you going to do now?" Calvin asked bitterly. "All your explanations are of no interest to me."

"Do? Why, nothing!" came the answer in slow, measured tones. "Your ship is safe. Return to Earth with your weapon."

Calvin's eyes snapped wide open. His first words were but a meaningless stutter. When he had recovered sufficiently to speak, he cried, "But you refused to give me the secret back on Mars."

"True! But we said nothing about refusing to let you take it. Earth as a suppliant for help we would refuse, for every world must work out its own destiny. However, when Earth refuses to accept our refusal, but, in your person, attempts a plan foredoomed to failure, and carries it out without a moment's hesitation, we no longer refuse. It had not been given you; you have taken it. Return to Earth with your weapon."

And finally Preston Calvin gained an inkling of the mental processes of these alien, incomprehensible people. His head bowed, and with trembling voice he whispered, "You are a strange people, but a great one!"

THE END

---

# DREADNOUGHTS OF DOOM

by HENRY ANDREW ACKERMAN

★ Silent, watchful, a stowaway waited  
for the space gods to grant him the  
moment a world had prayed for—a ★  
chance to die, that his planet might  
live forever!

---

ON the morning of 2114, Sol 8, a Lunite ore ship sighted a large cluster of wreckage drifting in space several thousand miles off Luna. Upon inspection they found it to be a fused mass of metal, the remains of some ill-fated spaceship—apparently of foreign manufacture, although of this the crew of the ore transport could not be certain. No sign of a survivor was apparent.

A little later on the freighter picked up other drifting pieces of flotsam over a rather wide area. The crew of the ship came to the conclusion that perhaps more than one ship had been wrecked. Just before landing on Luna, the freighter contacted a scout ship of the Satellite Patrol. They reported their discoveries and, after giving the Patrol men the derelict's location and approximate ether-drift figures, they forgot about the matter.

The Patrol ship, after the transport had made its planetfall, proceeded immediately to the spot where floated in space the unidentified wreckage. They had smiled a bit grimly, but had said nothing when the freighter's crew ventured the opinion that there must have been at least two or three ships wrecked.

Grimly and systematically they destroyed the bits of spaceship wreckage. . . . And so it was that Earth did not learn, until later, how close it had come to sudden destruction and swift conquest in the early dawn of 2114, Sol 8. But the Space Legion knew—and the Space Legion had been ready.

EXACTLY a week before, the Kinetogen-powered, Terran, ether-mining ship, *Gold Dust*, had been cruising along lazily above Luna. Although everything was running smoothly on board, Captain Bart, her skipper, was in a stormy mood. The *Gold Dust's* storage holds were annoyingly empty of the precious dust. To be exact, they were empty of any kind of metallic dust, although the ship had been out a full week now. He blamed two things for this condition. One was the Jovian mining fleet, which was seriously depleting the void around Luna of its invisible treasure of the precious dusts. The second, every time the *Gold Dust* did locate a good mining area, this dunderhead, Joel Rogers, would order full speed ahead, and the *Gold Dust* would go shooting off on another

tangent, apparently without rhyme or reason.

Jefferson Bart was a good captain, which meant he could take orders as well as give them, but he was making stormy weather of his present unhappy situation of having somebody else bossing his charge.

Just before the *Gold Dust* had made the leap into space, a tall, broad-shouldered young man, dressed in sailor's dungarees, had come aboard, presented himself to Captain Bart, and said briefly, "I'm Joel Rogers. Here's a note for you from the owners."

The note—Bart had been careful to check its authenticity—had merely said that Joel Rogers was to go along as a member of the crew, but that any suggestions or orders he gave were to be followed implicitly. That was that, as far as Captain Bart was concerned. The owners apparently knew what they were doing.

But he wondered morosely, as he stood in the control room now and watched with grudging admiration the way Joel Rogers deftly handled the congested rows of switches, levers, and what-not before him—did this young fellow know what he was doing?

Bart's natural taciturnity would not permit him to ask questions, but he couldn't help a sarcastic dig at what he considered a colossal waste of good mining time.

"Well," he said glumly, as though talking to himself, "we haven't been to Luna yet."

Joel Rogers looked at him quickly. "What do you mean by that?"

"It's about the only place we haven't been since we left port," Bart snorted. "Running all over blue space, like a—like a cat chasing a rat."

"I haven't seen any rats yet," Joel said equably, "unless that's one ahead of us there." He gestured toward the television.

Captain Bart peered at the screen, then swore roundly.

"It's another of those damn floating tin cans from Jupitern," he said. "Why can't those red devils stay at home and mine their own section of space, instead of coming clear across the Solar System and grabbing our supply?" He banged the

nearest port with an angry fist. "And why in blazes doesn't the World Federation or the Space Legion drive 'em out?"

"You forget the niceties of interplanetary law, Captain," Joel Rogers said drily. "Federation space areas extend only to the thousand-mile limit, and we're a good fifty thousand miles away." His eyes turned back to the television screen, and suddenly hardened.

"Speaking of rats—" he muttered under his breath. Then he straightened, clipped out a brisk order. "I'll take over the control room now, Captain!"

Bart started to protest, realized in the same instant that this mysterious stranger was not asking him to leave the control room, but commanding it—in the tones of one accustomed to unquestioning obedience.

With a half-angry, half-defiant glance at Joel Rogers, the captain stalked down to the main deck.

There, leaning against the hull and staring moodily out a port, Captain Bart grumbled to himself as he watched his ship draw near the Jovian miner—then grumbled aloud as he saw that Joel Rogers, at the controls, was taking the *Gold Dust* dangerously close to the other craft.

Suddenly he snapped erect, bellowed up at the control turret, "Hey, you, up there! Watch where you're going! Change your course!" He was off at a run, bounding up the ladder to the control room again. Aboard the ship from Jupiter there arose a similar clamoring and running about, for the nose of the *Gold Dust* had suddenly swerved, cutting over in an arc and heading straight for the other ship.

Captain Bart flung himself into the control room, shoved Joel Rogers aside from the instrument panel, and pressed the buttons that would change their course—too late. The needle-nose of the *Gold Dust* missed the Jovian, but the beryllium sideplates of the Earth ship, still swinging in an arc, sideswiped the landing fins of the other ship, leaving them a tangled mass of wreckage against the stern, almost wiping out the name, *Agfah*, painted there on its side.



"Now you've done it!" Captain Bart shouted at Joel Rogers, jumping up and down in his fury. "You've wrecked us both, you damned fool!"

Joel, apparently unconcerned over the collision, was staring intently at the gesticulating, shouting figures that suddenly appeared on the television screen, the *Agfah* officers.

"Only a few dents in your side, Captain," he said deprecatingly, "and the Jovian ship only lost her landing fins. Sorry I lost control."

"But now we'll have to tow them with the magnetic grapplers into port for repairs!" Captain Bart stormed.

"Yes," Joel said quietly, "we'll have to tow them into port for repairs, just as you say. That fin will be a cradle job." He turned, stepped lightly to the door. "I'm going below now, Captain. You may notify me when we reach port. By the way, Captain, I'd tow them to an Earth port if I were you—Niagara, say."

In the instant before he started bellowing orders to his crew, Captain Bart stared wonderingly at the retreating back of Joel Rogers.

"Lost control, hell!" he snorted. Then he muttered speculatively. "Maybe he does know what he's doing!"

And Lieutenant Joel Rogers, World Federation of Earth Space Legion Intelligence, playing a lone game in which the safety of Earth was the stake, nodded grimly to himself as he sped toward the crew's quarters. No question about it. That ugly red face that had stared so imperturb-

ably from the control room of the *Agfah* had been the face of the man he sought—Phox Sci, captain in rank, the most dangerous man in the Jovian espionage service. . . .

**S**TILL dressed in the nondescript garb of a space sailor, Joel Rogers sat across the desk from his chief in the latter's office at the Niagara Legion Base. Captain Hubbard looked up from a sheaf of papers on his desk, appraised Joel keenly.

"So far, so good, Lieutenant," he said crisply. "The *Agfah*, as we suspected, is merely a fast commercial ship, in no way fitted for warfare. Her engines and short-wave set are powerful, but we can't challenge her on those grounds. Repairs have been completed on her landing fins, and she makes the jump-off at midnight for space."

"The device has been attached to the hull?" Joel asked.

Captain Hubbard nodded. "Yes, on the hull, towards the stern, at the base of the lateral fin."

He cleared his throat and continued, "And, what is more important, the Jovians are not aware of it. The key, connected to the device by a wire, is on the underside of the left handrail in the main deck corridor, just aft of the captain's stateroom. Our plans are now complete. The men at the Sentinel Cylinder have been ordered to stand by for action. As soon as the *Agfah* passes Luna, the Meteors will blast and will keep on blasting."

He glanced at his wrist watch. "It is now five o'clock. You have your orders. You know where to go, what to do, if you can possibly do it."

He stood up, and Joel rose with him.

"You know what it means to Earth if you fail?" Captain Hubbard went on.

"I do, sir," Joel replied.

"And you realize what your own fate will be if you succeed?"

"Yes, sir."

The captain held out his hand impulsively. "A brave lad," he murmured. Then he snapped to attention, saluted first, Joel returning the salute.

## WHY BE LONELY

The friends YOU seek are seeking YOU! Pen-friends (home and overseas), personal friends (both sexes, all ages and classes), or life partners may be found through the medium of our successful Introductory Service

Write stating age and requirements, and enclose 3—2½d. stamps, and full details, testimonials and Membership Form will be sent you in a plain sealed envelope.

Secretary, V.C.C., 34 HONEYWELL ROAD LONDON, S.W.11.

Captain Hubbard could well afford to disregard legion etiquette by saluting first, for he was saluting a man who was about to die. If Joel succeeded in his plans for the next few hours his death was a foregone conclusion.

**I**T is a matter of public record that before the Red Men of the monster planet set out to conquer all of the outer planets of the Solar System in 2111, to weld them into the huge Five World Entente, there were more than three hundred thousand of them living on Earth. Many had undoubtedly returned to their native world, to fight for glory and the dictator, by 2112, Sep, but many thousands had remained behind.

The majority of those in Niagara, Joel Rogers knew, still constituted a little world to themselves in the squalid maze of slums about the spaceship terminal. It was toward that unsavory region that Joel headed as he left Intelligence Headquarters.

Joel's first action, just as dusk was settling down over the space port, was to buy a bottle of cheap *Hoaszz*. He stepped into a darkened alley, gargled a mouthful of the fiery liquid and spat it out, then doused the rest of the malodorous stuff over his clothing. Reeking like a barfly, he staggered out of the alley and down the street. Like a man who had been on a three-day jag, he reeled uncertainly through the door of the Red Spot Tavern, a favorite hang-out of Jovian characters and space sailors.

Joel slapped a five-dollar bill on the bar and ordered drinks for the house.

"Set 'em up," he said with a flourish to the bulbous-eyed alien behind the bar. "The drinks 're on me. I'm a guy that's just struck it rich!"

If his intrusion was unwelcome, he didn't seem to notice it, and when the glasses of the half-dozen scowling Jovians scattered about at the tables had been filled, Joel raised his glass in unsteady fingers, declaimed owlishly, "To the Sentinel Cylinder!" and tossed off the drink.

If he had been expecting a reaction he got it, although only his trained eyes would

have noticed it. As he peered through half-closed lids over the rim of his up-turned glass he saw an electric tremor of surprise pass over those scarlet masks. The low hum of conversation stopped for a split-second, then went on steadily. The barman's naturally bulging eyes took on an even more pop-eyed aspect as his gaze flashed to Joel's flushed face, then dropped to the bar he was polishing.

Joel realized, tautly, that he had struck home. Closely as the Space Legion guarded its secret—the secret on which it had been working for many years—word of it had seeped out to espionage agents from other planets. The Sentinel Cylinder, Earth's mightiest defensive arm, was known by name, at least, to these chunky men who envisioned themselves as future rulers of the Solar System. Just how much, he wondered grimly, did they know about it? That was what he must discover tonight.

Joel sloshed down a second drink and a third, then picked up his change and turned to go. The bulky bartender hurried up, pushed a bottle across the bar.

"You have drink on me this time," he said. When Joel had taken that one, the barman urged another on him.

"You know something about the Sentinel Cylinder, eh?" he said with what was meant to be an affable grin, but which utterly failed in its intended effect. Joel shuddered a little as he saw this facial abortion.

The Earthman winked a bleary eye at him. "Plenty," he said, "plenty." Then he straightened himself with a jerk. "But I'm not talkin'."

"Maybe," the maroon-skinned lump from Jupiter went on persuasively, "you'd like to make some money—a lot of money?"

"Not talkin'," Joel mumbled, and staggered toward the door. He knew they wouldn't try to take him there—the place was too public—but they wouldn't let him out of their sight. As he stumbled along toward Sun Spot Way and the spaceship cradles he saw, from the corner of his eye, the flitting shadows that gradually encircled him.

When the attack came they wouldn't hurt him—too much. They wanted him alive. But Joel knew how *Ka-lang*, the Jovian art of wrestling, can permanently disable a man who isn't expecting it. When the shadows did close in, silently and swiftly, at the mouth of an alley, Joel swung into the fray with both fists and both feet.

He cursed and fought like a drunken sailor, but they were hauling him down by sheer force of numbers when a lumbering figure in blue came pounding up. It was a cop, Joel saw with an inward curse—a fighting cop.

"Scatter, you imps from hell!" the patrolman shouted. He began flailing away so furiously with his nightstick that the tide of battle turned in an instant.

Desperate at this interference with his carefully laid plans, Joel swung a wild roundhouse right and, apparently by accident, caught the cop squarely on the chin. As the cop went down, Joel fell with him, and the two of them were promptly pounced upon. Joel felt suddenly sick as he saw a scarlet heavyweight aim a kick at the cop's face. Then he could see nothing more, for adhesive was quickly slapped over his eyes and mouth; his wrists and ankles were strapped.

THEY carried him, running, to what he judged was the other end of the alley. He could tell that they were forcing his helpless body into the fuselage of a rocket plane. There followed a hurried, short ride; then Joel felt himself being carried again, up endless stairs, along interminable corridors. Finally he was dropped to the floor, the bandages ripped roughly from his eyes and mouth.

Joel looked up belligerently at the circle of his captors, started to curse them drunkenly, but a brutal kick in the side silenced him.

"This foolish one babbled of the Sentinel Cylinder, so we brought him to you, Captain Sci," said the giant red man who had kicked Joel. "The low Earthling is stupid with drink."

"There are ways of making even drunken men talk," came a quietly derisive

answer, and Joel lifted his head to leer up at the saturnine masklike countenance of Phox Sci, captain of the Jovian espionage service.

"Let me up from here," Joel growled, "and I'll talk for you plenty—with my fists." Then his head lolled back and he hiccupped.

"Quick!" Sci ordered. "Bring matches before he becomes too drunk to talk!" He knelt swiftly beside the prostrate Earthman, seized a handful of Joel's hair, jerked his head up.

"Tell me!" he commanded. "What is the Sentinel Cylinder?"

"Go t' hell," Joel muttered thickly, and closed his eyes sleepily.

Someone thrust a book of matches into Sci's hand. Dropping Joel's head, the man from Jupiter tore a match from the book, jabbed it viciously under Joel's thumb-nail, lit it. As the flame curled down, licked around the nail, Joel opened one eye drowsily, flickered the match loose with a shake of his hand, closed the eye again.

With a snarled curse, Sci lit another match, seized Joel's head firmly, and held the match to his cheek.

Joel almost cried aloud at the searing pain, but he did not quiver. Then, as the odor of burned flesh struck his nostrils, nauseating him, and the torture seemed more than he could bear, he opened his mouth—and snored.

Phox Sci, with a cry of rage, sprang to his feet, and just in time, for Joel could not have endured that gnawing flame an instant longer without crying aloud.

"The stupid fool is unconscious from liquors," Sci hissed, and he spat in Joel's face. That, even more than the torture he had endured, filled Joel with a furious desire to lunge upward into battle, but Phox Sci's next words forestalled any such foolish action.

"We have no time to waste on him here. Zero hour is rapidly approaching, and we must embark for space. Come; we can work on him at our leisure aboard the *Agfah*. Bring him along."

That, Joel Rogers realized, was just what he had been waiting and praying for. Had

he tried to stow away on the Jovian ship he would undoubtedly have been discovered and unceremoniously pitched out the airlock. Now he was going aboard at their insistence, and it was all-important, for Earth's sake, that he be aboard when the ship took off, even though torture and death awaited him.

LUNA is more than two hundred thousand miles away from Terra, yet when Joel Rogers woke up from his brief catnap, the *Agfah*, traveling with the speed of a destroyer, was already past it. Joel had been flung into a cabin bunk to sleep off what the Jovians thought to be his drunken stupor. He had managed to snatch some sleep, for he knew he would soon be needing all of his strength and mental alertness.

It was not two hours later, however, that the cabin door was opened and two armed sentries entered, prodded Joel to his feet, and curtly ordered him to fall in between them. As they escorted him forward towards the captain's cabin, Joel noticed that the *Agfah* had undergone a startling transformation.

Gone were the slovenly sailors and metal extractors who had swarmed her decks when the *Gold Dust* had sideswiped her. Now the men were dressed in the natty black uniforms of the grand Jovian space fleet, and they stepped about their duties in the brisk manner of trained fighting men.

Captain Phox Sci had also changed in appearance and manner, and was now resplendent in the uniform of a high officer of the Greater Jovian Fleet. He sat behind his massive desk and studied Joel with satisfaction.

"So our tipsy Earthling has regained his senses?" He motioned the sentries aside, waved Joel to a seat.

"In your drunkenness last night," he went on suavely, "you mentioned the phrase, 'Sentinel Cylinder'. What do you know about it?"

The eyes of the two men from different worlds met, challenged each other, and the gaze of neither Jovian nor Earthman flickered for a minute.

Then Joel spoke, with quiet finality. "Never heard of it," he said.

The sardonic smile did not leave the corners of Sci's mouth. "As you may have heard," he went on, "the Jovians are noted for their—er—persuasive methods of loosening unwilling tongues."

"You might try some of them," Joel told him tonelessly.

Sci's eyes narrowed a trifle. "There are men," he admitted stonily, "who cannot be coerced by pain or force. Perhaps you are one of them. The man does not live, though, who will not listen to reason. It is important, though not vital, that the Jovian high command have more definite information of this thing you call the Sentinel Cylinder. Important, I say, but not vital. Earth is safely doomed!"

The beady, protruding eyes blazed and the high-pitched voice rose in a crackle of excitement as Sci went on, "You do not believe me? You think I boast? Then step to that porthole and tell me what you see!"

The throbbing Kinetogens of the *Agfah* had slackened and quieted as the two conversed, and Joel knew, as he strode across to the port, that the ship was coasting on its momentum.

Joel peered through the port, and his heart threatened to leap into his throat. Dead ahead were hundreds of long silvery objects, very sleek, very graceful in the sunlight that struck them. No mistaking those trim lines. They were heavy-duty fighting ships.

"What do you see?" Phox Sci demanded.

"I see space covered with a screen of warships," Joel replied. "A hundred or so—no, closer to five hundred of them."

"Look closer," said Sci. "What else do you see?"

"I see a vanguard of cruisers and scout ships," muttered Joel.

"Do you see the battleship squadrons?"

"Yes," Joel admitted.

"Do you see the troop transports, the mine layers?" pressed Sci.

"Yes." Joel's face was white now.

"You see more than that," said Phox Sci, as Joel turned away from the port. "You see the greatest space armada ever

assembled. You see three hundred of the fastest, most destructive destroyer-cruisers ever built. You see the space fleet that will descend just before dawn on your planet to wipe her proud cities off the map!" Sci's thin lips twisted in scorn.

"Your stupid Legion has been so busy playing games about the Asteroids it has forgotten to watch the fourth quadrant of space—the shortest route by far from Jupiter to Earth. While your Satellite Patrol has been sniffing like curious dogs at the Jovian mining craft, which have been annoying your miners near Earth, this fleet has been collecting here. Those ships near the planet actually did engage in ether-mining—to lull the suspicions of your espionage agents. When, by a clumsy feigned accident, the *Agfah* was disabled and towed to port so she could be inspected, your spies found her to be just what she assumed to be—a floating ore-ship. But these ships will mine the ether in a different manner."

"Why do you tell me all of this?" Joel demanded.

"Because anything you learn here will be of no avail to you until it is too late—and because I wish to show you the futility of refusing to aid us by supplying information."

"What makes you think Earth won't fight back?" Joel asked. His gaze was cool.

"Earth will not be able to fight back," Sci asserted. "The destroyer divisions strike at dawn, laying every important military space port, arsenal, and spaceship factory to waste. At three A.M., Earth time, a fleet of our mine layers begins mining the space above Tycho, bottling up your puny Satellite Patrol stationed there, so we can bomb it at our leisure." He nodded, expression impassive.

"That is but the first step. Before the Earth can recover, before the main body of your fleet can blast back to prevent it, one hundred thousand crack Jovian troops will have been landed at your capital, New Washington, from those troop ships that you just saw. One hundred thousand fighting men—one third as many as your entire Planet Guard—and that is just the first contingent. When they have gained a foot-

hold, other thousands will come, backed up by the Second Jovian Battle Fleet. In the meantime, these three hundred destroyers will be sweeping over the entire planet. Within a week, Earth will have surrendered—or she will be in ruins!"

"But," Joel Rogers interrupted quietly, "what of our fleet? It will exact a terrible revenge when it does return from the Asteroids. And how about Mars, Venus, and Mercury? Do you think they would stand by and see the only other democratic planet in the System humbled?"

Phox Sci's eyes now burned with the fierce light of the fanatic. "Democracy!" he snarled. "Democracy is about to be wiped from the face of the System! When we strike, our allies, Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, and Pluto, strike. The moment word is flashed of the success of our attack, war fleets from all four worlds will swoop down to demolish Mars, Venus, and Mercury. Democracy ends at dawn! As for the return of your fleet! Hah! The fools will bump right into the mine areas we have so cleverly planted in the course they must take. They will be devastated by the most destructive mine field ever laid! And you, Earthling," he said, glaring at Joel, "have a decision to make—quickly." He paused, as if to emphasize the importance of what he was about to say.

"Our spies have mapped every gun of your defenses; every one of your space ports, big or little. Only one thing has escaped us, a thing we have heard of only by rumor—the Sentinel Cylinder. We believe it to be a warship base, but we are not sure. You proved, by your drunken talk last night, that you know of its existence, probably its location. I have gone to great pains to show you the hopelessness of your position. You will tell me, now, where it is. In return I offer you, on the word of the Dictator, complete amnesty, safe escort to any planet you choose, and—ten thousand dollars in platinum."

"If I refuse?" Joel said.

"You go out the airlock immediately with only two hours' oxygen supply in your air tank!"

Joel shifted uneasily in his seat. "That's

a hard thing to ask a man, Captain," he said, "a hard decision to make. You'll give me a few minutes to think it over?"

"I give you exactly five minutes," the Jovian replied smoothly, sure of his man now.

"Mind if I walk around the deck a bit while I'm thinking?" Joel asked.

"You may," the Jovian replied. "At the first false move, of course, you will be shot in your tracks." He beckoned the sentries, rapped out an order in their tongue.

**F**IVE minutes . . . would it be enough?

The two hulking red men alert at his heels, Joel strode up and down the short length of corridor that was the main deck. Finally he sauntered over to lean against the wall. With extreme nonchalance he proceeded to light a cigarette, all the while watching the two guards narrowly. To all outward appearance he seemed to be lost in deep thought.

He leaned his weight against the wooden rail that jutted out from the wall and slouched a little. He let his left arm slide carelessly on the polished rail until he could feel the underside of it. Nothing there. Carelessly, drawing his hand back and forth, he edged slowly toward the captain's cabin, and three feet farther along he found it—a little metal projection that gave slightly when he pressed on it.

The two sentinels, watching him, must have thought him a very nervous man, for his hands as they gripped the rail seemed to twitch agitatedly, endlessly. The middle finger of his left hand gave a final nervous jerk.

He straightened up, drew a long breath.

"All right," he said to the guards, "I'm ready."

"You have decided to be sensible?" Phox Sci said with a smile of satisfaction as Joel re-entered the cabin.

Joel nodded bleakly.

"The Sentinel Cylinder is a hidden military space port?" Sci went on quickly. "You will lead us to it?"

Joel nodded again, slowly. "Yes," he said, "the Sentinel Cylinder is a hidden Legion base. The Meteors are quartered there. I'll lead you to it."

"Good!" Captain Sci could not conceal his elation. "You will go with me in my own destroyer when the time comes. Now I must ask you to return to your quarters."

As Joel Rogers, lieutenant in the Space Legion, stepped along between his guards, he held his head high. It didn't matter so much now that he had but a few hours left to live. He had played his part, played the game to the hilt with Captain Sci—and he had won.

**T**WO hours before it would be dawn on Earth they came for Joel, marching him to the airlock, where Captain Phox Sci, dressed in a clumsy balloon-like suit, used for exposure in airless space, stood waiting.

"We go now," the Jovian said, and he handed Joel a space suit similar to his own. After Joel had donned the bulky suit he turned his attention to what was happening outside the ship.

Through the thick glassite of an observation port he watched a cruiser approach, her sunward side gleaming like the head of a comet. Power blasts shot alternately from forward, rear, and lateral vents as the pilot eased the other spaceship closer to the *Agfah*. In a moment both ships were flashing along at equal velocity, side by side.

Captain Sci said, "Follow me," and flung over the lever that operated the inner door of the air lock.

Once Sci, Joel and his two guards were inside the lock, the inner door was closed and the outer lock opened.

Joel saw that magnetic-grapple lines had already been fastened to the destroyer, and it was along them, hand over hand, that the captain led the way, Joel and the two guards following.

As they slowly pulled themselves along the lines toward the waiting ship, Joel marveled at the scene about him. Space, it seemed, for an area of tens of cubic miles was filled with twinkling ships' lights, and every ship that he saw was a grim-looking destroyer, with row upon row of tubes for the self-accelerating rocket torpedoes.

But the ship to which they were transferring was different from the others. It, too, was a super-arsenal, but, if Joel knew

anything about ships, it was one of the fastest ever to leave a planet.

When they were in the other ship, Captain Sci wasted no time in leading them to the control turret. With Sci at the controls, the ship increased its acceleration and seemed to leave the rest of the fleet behind. As Joel watched from a side port he saw the huge swarm of destroyer-cruisers swing into smooth, co-ordinated movement below, maneuvering, climbing, rising up to form into a solid phalanx of spitting power vents and scintillating mirrors—a cloud of doom.

Sci circled high above until the armada, three hundred strong, was in alignment beneath him, then dipped his ship down and shot ahead to take up the spearhead of the formation. Joel, sitting tautly in the seat behind the wily Jovian, wondered grimly if his months of careful plans and stratagems would work out to the split-second he had timed them, if his message had gone through. . . .

On through the starry void the dreadnoughts of doom swept, straight toward sleeping Earth. As minute followed minute, and the ships clipped off fifty thousand miles, a hundred thousand miles, Joel Rogers prayed with the fervency of a condemned man for the countless lives of his fellow countrymen. Time after time he looked backward and upward, searching, probing the depths of space.

Then he saw the thing for which he was desperately seeking, and his gasp of relief and exultation brought a sharp look of inquiry from Phox Sci.

"Something troubles you?" the Jovian asked caustically.

"Nothing troubles me now," Joel replied. He paused a minute, then leaned forward, speaking slowly, distinctly. "Sci, I told you I'd lead you to the Meteors. I'll do better than that—I'll bring them to you. Before you meet them, though, there are a couple of things you might like to know." His face was grim now.

"First, I think you've bitten off a bigger chunk than you can chew when you try to swallow democracy at one gulp. Second, never underestimate your opponent. You Jovians started planning this attack five

years ago. Earth started plans to thwart it ten years ago."

In reply to Sci's quick, incredulous glance, Joel went on, "Yes, we knew you had a bee in your bonnet for ruling the entire Solar System, but we didn't see it that way. Then, years ago, the Legion quietly began its search, seeking the most strategic spot to build a super-space port, the most powerful in the System. So quietly and carefully did we work that when this monster hornet's nest was completed, the spies of other planets had been able to discover no more about it than the fact that it probably did exist and it was known as the 'Sentinel Cylinder'." He shook his head.

"Our next step was to criss-cross space from Mars to Earth with a system of detection stations. These had automatic thermoscopes, or delicate thermo-couples, for locating ships by their intrinsic heat, and radio-sounding devices for measuring distances. The stations immediately flashed full information to Earth—direct to Legion Headquarters—whenever any ship came in range of the delicate instruments." Joel's smiles became grimmer now.

"You thought your ships were massing, unnoticed. Not so. We knew the craft were there, and we guessed that their intent was not peaceful. What the ships were up to we did not know, nor when they would strike, nor how. That was why it was important that one of your ships—we selected the *Agfah* because you were on it—be forced to visit a Terrestrial port, so that our skilled mechanics could attach a short-wave transmitter to its hull. That was why it was so important that I be put aboard the *Agfah* when it left Earth—so I could tap out my information for the Sentinel Cylinder to pick up, after I had learned what I could of your plans."

AS Captain Sci listened, his face showed first contempt, then alarm, then black fury, and he half-rose from his seat. But Joel Rogers went on unhurriedly. "Three hours before this fleet of yours started for Earth, the Meteors had left the Cylinder, accelerating fast and true and much swifter than your ships can speed, straight toward



# TIMBER!



# MAN! be BIG

## FOR ONLY 2/6

The Body Sculpture Club believes that every man has the right to a healthy, muscular body. So, for 2/6 ONLY, it offers you FIVE Test Courses teaching the principles of Body Sculpture. See what these amazing Courses comprise:

1. HOW TO MOULD MIGHTY ARMS. 2. CREATE A DEEP, STURDY CHEST. 3. BUILD A BROAD, BRAWNY BACK. 4. DEVELOP A GRIP OF STEEL. 5. BUILD LEGS LIKE PILLARS OF OAK!
- These thrilling Test Courses will build YOU a Big, Husky Body easily, surely, privately in your own home. Compiled by George F. Jowett, "Champion of Champions," and President of the Body Sculpture Club. The Body Sculpture system also reveals favourite American methods of achieving fast, spectacular results. Shows how to build extra inches - pounds

of massive flesh, bulky muscles. The Body Sculpture training definitely develops a 48 INCH CHEST, 18 INCH BICEPS - all in pounds of new, solid muscle.

# FREE!

If you send NOW you will receive a FREE Book with pictures and stories of famous athletes, PLUS - Two FREE Art plates showing all the Body Muscles, PLUS - details of FREE MEMBERSHIP of the Body Sculpture Club. All free to you, if you send now!

### HURRY! HURRY!

Get your FIVE Test Courses in one handy volume, PLUS your FREE Gifts! Send 2/6 ONLY to the Club you'll be proud of, dedicated to Building Mighty Manhood. Write now or send Coupon at once to The Body Sculpture Club, 32/7, Success House, Surbiton, Surrey.



Dear George, I enclose 2/6 P.O. (crossed and made payable to The Body Sculpture Club) for my FIVE Test Courses, FREE Book, FREE Charts and details of many other Club offers and privileges.

NAME..... AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

## Body Sculpture Club

32/7, SUCCESS HOUSE, SURBITON, Surrey

you. The Meteors are here now, Captain Sci!"

"You talk insanities," snarled Sci. "I see no Meteors."

"One seldom sees a trap until it is too late," Joel said. "You have led your men and ships into one of the most disastrous traps in the history of space warfare! Do you know, Captain, we Earthmen have concocted a compound that can be made into a paint that will not reflect light, any light, even that of the sun? And did you know that the term 'Sentinel Cylinder' is not a name chosen merely to mystify? The Cylinder is actually that, a real cylinder of beryllium steel, covered with a coat of our non-reflecting compound, and used as a destroyer base by our Legion. The Cylinder is not ahead of you, Captain, on Earth, as you were deluded into thinking. It is behind you, in space itself. But the Meteors aren't behind you any more. They've caught up with you! *Look up there!*"

With a cry of consternation Captain Sci whirled around, stared upward and back. There, swooping from the interstellar gloom and looking like phantoms of space because of their non-reflective coating, was a tight V-shaped wedge of monster destroyers, plunging down and forward with swift ferocity at the rear of the Jovian phalanx!

Cursing furiously, Sci jammed the controls of his ship over, barked a series of orders into the microphone in front of him. As the Jovian armada started to swing about, to re-form in battle alignment, Sci flung a contemptuous taunt at Joel Rogers.

"A paltry hundred ships!" he sneered. "We will blast them from the ether!"

"Will you?" Joel asked quietly.

Then a strange thing happened, happened so swiftly, so disastrously, the Jovian leader could only stare in open-mouthed wonder at what he saw.

The Space Legion ships were still more than five miles away. The Jovians were only half through their reversing maneuver when, in the next instant, a mighty simultaneous jet of furious flame burst from a hundred torpedo tubes. Even before the light of that concerted blast had died from

Joel's eyes, the front rank of the closely-packed Jovian ships disintegrated in a blinding blaze.

In one terrific explosion, one hundred Jovian destroyers were torn into shattered wreckage, sent spinning and flying through space in twisted fragments. Again that sheet of flame swept out from the Legion ships, and the Jovian phalanx, shaken like a cyclone-struck wheat field, began to melt away, dissolve into nothingness.

On and on came the Legion squadron in never faltering line, hurling its barrage of death before it. Now half of the proud Jovian armada had been destroyed—two thirds of it. Panic-stricken, a few of the Jovian pilots turned to flee, but the long arm of death, reaching out from the Meteors, caught them, hurled them into incandescent oblivion.

With a cry of despair Captain Sci watched this cataclysm of destruction taking place so swiftly, and he suddenly cried out in bewilderment, "What is it?"

"I'd say it was our new invincible torpedoes," Joel Rogers answered him quietly.

"But even torpedoes require great skill in aiming, and every one that has been fired has made a direct hit!" the Jovian shrieked. He was now nearly insane.

"Our torpedoes require no aiming," Joel said with a grim smile. "You see, they are light-attracted. The glare of enemy power vents sets off photo-electric cells; relays guide the torpedo relentlessly to the source of the light." He regarded the frantic Jovian. "And you thought Earth was going to be a push-over," he said musingly.

"You!" Sci screamed. "You are responsible for this!"

He clawed at the service automatic strapped to his waist.

Joel Rogers arose from his seat, stood erect. "It is an honour," he said quietly, "to die for one's planet." He stood at attention, saluted. But it was not the red man he saluted—it was the tri-colored insignia of Earth on a destroyer-cruiser.

Joel Rogers was still standing at attention when the torpedo struck.

THE END

"Two weeks ago I bought a 'Joan the Wad' and to-day I have won £32. 10s. Please send two more." B.C. Tredegar, S. Wales.  
—Extract from "Everybody's Fortune Book," 1931

# JOAN THE WAD

is the Lucky Cornish Piskey  
who Sees All, Hears All, Does All.

JOAN THE WAD is Queen of the Lucky Cornish Piskeys. Thousands of persons all over the world claim that Joan the Wad has brought them Wonderful Luck in the way of Health, Wealth and Happiness.

## HISTORY FREE FOR A STAMP.

If you will send me your name and address, a 1/- stamp and a stamped addressed envelope for reply, I will send you a history of the Cornish Piskey folk, and the marvellous miracles they accomplish. JOAN THE WAD is the QUEEN of the Lucky Cornish Piskeys, and with whom good luck and good health always attend.

## AS HEALER.

One Lady writes: "My sister suffered very badly for years, but since I gave her a Joan the Wad to keep near her she is much easier. Do you think this is due to Joan or the Water from the lucky Well?"

## AS MATCHMAKER.

A young girl wrote and informed me that she had had scores of boy friends, but it was not until she had visited Cornwall and taken Joan back with her that she met the boy of her dreams, and as they got better acquainted she discovered he also has Joan the Wad.

## AS SPECULATOR.

A man writes: "I had some shares that for several years I couldn't give away. They were 1/- shares and all of a sudden they went up in the market to 7/9. I happened to be staring at Joan the Wad. Pure imagination, you may say, but I thought I saw her wink approvingly. I sold out, reinvested the money at greater profit and have prospered ever since."

JOAN THE WAD's achievements are unique. Never before was such a record placed before the Public. Ask yourself if you have ever heard of anything so stupendous. You have not. Results are what count, and these few Extracts from actual letters are typical of the many hundreds that are received, and from which we shall publish selections from time to time. We unreservedly GUARANTEE that these letters were absolutely spontaneous, and the originals are open to inspection at JOAN'S COTTAGE. Send at once for full information about this PROVED Luck Bringer. You, too, may benefit in Health, Wealth and Happiness to an amazing extent.

## "SUNDAY GRAPHIC" PICTURE PUZZLE.

No. 175.—"Dear Joan the Wad, I received this week cheque for £71. 8s. 7d. My share of the £1,000 Prize of the 'Sunday Graphic' Picture Puzzle. I have been near winning before, but you have brought me just the extra luck I wanted."—F. T., Salisbury.

## WON £153. 17s. THEN £46. 10s. 3d.

No. 191.—"Genuine account of Luck... since receiving Joan the Wad... I was successful in winning £153. 17s. in the 'People' Word No. 178 and also the 'News of the World' Word No. 280, £46. 10s. 3d., also £1 on a football coupon, which is amazing in itself, as all the luck came in one week."—A. B., Leamington Spa.

## WINNERS OF £6. 11s. 1d.

No. 195.—"My father, myself and my sister had the pleasure of winning a Crossword Puzzle in the 'Sunday Pictorial,' which came to £6. 11s. 1d., which we put down to JOAN THE WAD, and we thank her very much."—L. B., Exning.

## WON PRIZE OF £13. 13s.

No. 214.—"Arrival of your charm followed the very next day by the notification that I had won a prize of £13. 13s. in a Literary Competition."—F. H. R., Wallington.

## "DAILY HERALD" PICTURE CONTEST.

No. 216.—"Since having received JOAN THE WAD I received cheque, part share in the 'Daily Herald' Picture Contest, £3. 1s."—M. F., Notting Hill.

## £30,000 WINNER.

No. 222.—"Mrs. A. . . . of Lewisham, has just won £30,000 and says she has a JOAN THE WAD, so please send one to me."—Mrs. V., Bromley.

## FIRST PRIZE "NUGGETS."

No. 238.—"I have had some good luck since receiving JOAN THE WAD. I have won First Prize in 'ANSWERS' 'Nuggets.' I had JOAN THE WAD in February, and I have been lucky ever since."—Mrs. N. W., Wolverhampton.

## WON "DAILY MIRROR" HAMPER.

No. 245.—"I have just had my first win since having JOAN THE WAD, which was a 'DAILY MIRROR' HAMPER."—E. M. F., Brentwood.

## WON "NUGGETS" £300.

No. 257.—"My husband is a keen Competitor in 'Bullets' and 'Nuggets.' He had not any luck until I gave him JOAN THE WAD, when the first week he secured a credit note in 'Nuggets' and last week FIRST Prize in 'Nuggets' £300."—Mrs. A. B., Salford.

## CAN ANYONE BEAT THIS?

No. 286.—"Immediately after receiving my JOAN THE WAD I won a 3rd Prize in a local Derby Sweep, then I was given employment after seven months of idleness and finally had a correct forecast in Picture Puzzle 'Glasgow Sunday Mail,' which entitles me to a share of the Prize Money."—W. M., Glasgow, C.4.

All you have to do is to send a 1/- stamp (Savings Stamps accepted) and a stamped addressed envelope for the history to

**60, JOAN'S COTTAGE, LANIVET, BODMIN, CORNWALL.**

For Canada and U.S.A., send 50 cents for History, or \$2 for both History and Mascot.

For Australia, send 1s. 6d. for History, or 8s. 0d. for both History and Mascot.



GUARANTEED DIPPED IN WATER  
FROM THE LUCKY SAINT'S WELL

# Are You Satisfied with *YOUR* *BODY?*



**Let Me PROVE I Can  
Make You a NEW MAN in  
Only 15 Minutes a Day!**

**HOW** do YOU look stripped—in locker room  
or gym? Skinny, scrawny, sparrow-chested,  
self-conscious, **HALF ALIVE?**

How do you feel when people notice your physique? Can you stand their gaze? If you're not satisfied with your present physical development, let me PROVE I can make you a New Man—in only 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home. I'll give you biceps like iron and a fine, deep chest. I'll broaden your shoulders, add ridges of solid muscle to your stomach, fill out your arms and legs. If you are fat and flabby, I'll streamline you into a picture of radiant manhood.

## What "Dynamic-Tension" Can do

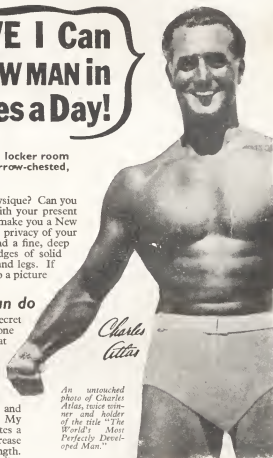
How? "Dynamic-Tension!" That's the secret that changed me from a flat-chested 7-stone weakling into the red-blooded HE-MAN that I am to-day. That's how I'm turning thousands of fellows like yourself into New Men—with husky, handsome body and tireless endurance. I can do the same for you. Let me PROVE it!

"Dynamic-Tension" is a PRACTICAL and NATURAL method. You use no apparatus. My method actually is FUN! In only 15 minutes a day, you will actually see your muscles increase into powerful bulges of brawn and strength. You'll enjoy new stamina, a glad-to-be-alive feeling. Before you know it, you'll have a rugged, handsome body, a rough-and-ready ambition surging out of you that the world can't lick. I'll show you how it really feels to LIVE!

## SEND FOR FREE BOOK

All I ask is that you post the coupon NOW for my illustrated FREE book "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows actual photos of pupils I've changed from weaklings into remarkable specimens of manhood. If you want a body that men respect and women admire, then get this coupon into the post as fast as you can. Address to:

**CHARLES ATLAS,**  
(Dept. 147-M) 2 Dean St., London, W.1.



*Charles  
Atlas*

*An untouched  
photo of Charles  
Atlas, twice winner  
and holder  
of the title "The  
World's Most  
Perfectly Developed  
Man."*

**CHARLES ATLAS** (Dept. 147-M)  
2 Dean Street, London, W.1.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic-Tension" will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your FREE book "Everlasting Health and Strength," and details of your amazing 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER.

Name.....  
(Please print or write clearly.)

Address.....